

The Gospel According To Matthew

**The Gospel
of Matthew:**

A Verse By Verse Commentary

By

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The Gospel Of Matthew

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2nd Edition, 1999, 3rd Edition 2020

ISBN 1-877825-15-8

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INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

The Place Of Matthew Among The Gospels

“The most important book ever written” E. Renan

The present order of our gospels is known as the Augustinian order. Named after St. Augustine, it is the order in which he believed the gospels were composed. Matthew was written first, then Mark, next Luke and then finally John. Matthew is placed first in order among the gospels because it was universally believed by the early church to have been the first gospel written. In all the early lists and texts of the gospels Matthew always comes first. Matthew is the most quoted of all the gospels. All four gospels were universally received by the church as authoritative but Matthew was the favorite. Throughout church history this has also been true.

There Is A Modern Lack Of Interest In Matthew

The study of Matthew has been characterized by lack of interest in our present day. Matthew is assumed to have been written after Mark and Matthew is also believed to have used Mark as a source. Mark is studied first, because it is supposedly the closest to the original and consequently gives the most accurate information on the life of Christ. Luke is appreciated because of its beauty and because it contains more information than Mark. John is studied for its intimate stories of Jesus and His disciples. Therefore, Matthew is left out. However, Matthew is extremely important. It is the bridge between the testaments and is one of the four essential books that must be mastered if one is to understand the basic outline of the eternal plan of God (the other books being Genesis, Daniel, and Revelation).

The Characteristics Of Matthew's Gospel

The following are some of the characteristics of Matthew's gospel.

It Is A Gospel For Jewish Christians

Matthew is a Jewish Christian and the emphasis of his book is mainly to Jewish Christians. Matthew shows that Jesus ministry is a fulfillment of the Old Testament hopes. He applies Old Testament texts to various aspects of Jesus ministry. These include: His attitude toward the Old Testament law, the traditions of the Jewish scribes, His controversies with the official representatives of Judaism, and the nature of the church versus Judaism. These are issues that would confront Jewish Christians who have accepted Jesus as their Messiah and who need to work out the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. These truths would help them proclaim and defend the gospel among non-Christian Jews. Therefore, it is likely, that the gospel would have been written by a Jewish Christian and a Jewish readership would make up a large portion of his audience.

The Gospel According To Matthew

The Jewish touch can be seen with the following:

1. Matthew begins his genealogy with Abraham, the father of the Jewish race (1:1-2).
2. His explanation of the name Jesus (1:21) assumes his readers know the Hebrew meaning since there is a play on words in Hebrew between “Jesus” and “save.”
3. He regularly uses the phrase “Son of David” when referring to Jesus. Matthew also uses the more Jewish phrase “kingdom of heaven” rather than “kingdom of God” as Mark and Luke do. Jews did not like to use the name "God" any more than they had too.
4. Only Matthew tells us about Jesus’ ministry being limited to the Jews (10:5,6) and the ignoring of the Gentile woman's request for help (15:24).
5. The only mention of the Samaritans in the gospel is when Jesus says don’t go to them (10:5)
6. Untranslated Aramaic terms such as raka (5:22). See also korbanas (27:6) translated “treasury.”
7. Unexplained references to Jewish customs such as hand-washing traditions (15:2), contrast that to Mark’s explanation to Gentile readers (Mk 7:3,4). The mention of the wearing of phylacteries (23:5) suggests that Matthew expected his readers to be familiar with Jewish customs.
8. Many issues would be of interest only to Jewish readers. These include: fasting (6:16-18); the Sabbath(12:1-14; 24:20), temple offerings (5:23-24), and the temple tax (17:24-27). These indicate that the gospel was primarily directed toward the Jews. Therefore, Matthew, along with Hebrews is the most Jewish book in the New Testament.

It Is A Gospel For Gentiles As Well

The good news according to Matthew finishes with Jesus sending out the eleven to make disciples of all nations (28:19). The Gospel also gives many hints that this is his ultimate aim. Thus the ministry, for all its Jewishness, and its fulfillment of the hopes and destiny of Israel, shows that the Jewish people do not have the exclusive privileges to be called the people of God. Matthew shows that the message of God has now broken out of the confines of Judaism. God now calls non-Jews to share the privileges of Israel. The true people of God is made up of those who accept Jesus as their Messiah, both Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 3:27,28). Blessing of God has passed from the Jewish nation to Gentiles. The paradox is that the most Jewish gospel contains the harshest language toward the Jewish nation (8:10-12; 21:43; 23:29-39; 27:24-25). This is because the majority of people failed to respond to Jesus as Israel's true Messiah. Today what counts for membership as the true people of God is not nationality but individual faith toward Jesus.

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The following passages show evidence of Matthew's emphasis on the Gentiles.

1. The genealogy (1:5) has at least two Gentiles (Rahab and Ruth).
2. The Gentile Magi from the East at Christ's birth (2:1-12).
3. The Roman centurion who exercised great faith (8:5-13).
4. The statement "In His name Gentiles have hope" (12:21).
5. The field is the "world" (13:38).
6. The faith of the Canaanite woman (15:21-28).
7. The Parable of tenants (21:33-43).
8. The Parable of the marriage feast (22:1-10).
9. The Roman soldier's confession (27:54).
10. The Good news to be preached to the whole world (28:19). See also 24:14.

It Is A Gospel For The Church

Matthew is the only gospel to mention the word "church" (16:18, 18:17). Use of the word is seen by some to indicate a formal established organization that existed late in the first century. However, the references in 18:17 is not to a single world-wide body but rather to a local congregation. The reference in 16:18 is to the future. The impression is that the church has not been built yet. There is, however, much in Matthew that would be helpful for the training of church leaders.

1. Discussion of the correct ethical use of the Old Testament Law (5:17-48) and the misuse of scribal tradition (15:1-20).
2. Divorce (5:31-32; 19:3-9). Note only in Matthew do we find unchastity as grounds for terminating a marriage.
3. Warnings against false prophets and pseudo-Messiahs (7:15-20; 24:4,5; 11:23-26).
4. Need to discriminate between true and false disciples within the church (7:6, 13-27; 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50; 22:10-14).
5. The response to persecution (10).
6. Practical issues such as the Sabbath (12:1-14).
7. Relationships within the Christian community (18) with special attention for the procedure of dealing with an offender (18:5-20).

8. The wrong way to conduct religious leadership (23).

This suggests that Matthew would have been a valuable book for church leaders.

It Is A Gospel Carefully Written

Matthew is not a haphazard collection of stories. He frequently omits incidental details which are not essential to his purpose. The same stories that Mark tells in a lively style, Matthew tells in a more concise form, giving only the bare essentials. For example, stories that make up 43 verses in Mark 5 take only 16 verses in Matthew 8:28-34; 9:18-26. Matthew is less the story-teller than the other gospel writers.

Matthew Is A Gospel Based Upon Scripture

The formula quotation “this was to fulfill” is used 10 times in Matthew. He quotes the Old Testament more than any other gospel writer. Matthew draws attention to Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament themes. He does this in both an open and subtle way. Often his quoting of Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament will seem obscure to us.

The Authorship Of Matthew

Unanimous tradition ascribes authorship to Matthew-the disciple whom Jesus called in 9:9. Matthew, who bore the name Levi, was a hated tax collector in charge of a border crossing station. We know that he was a wealthy man (9:11; Luke 5:29). Frequent references to money in the gospel may point to his authorship. Last mention is in Acts 1 with the rest of the eleven disciples.

The tax collector position would have made him an ideal candidate for writing this gospel for the following reasons:

1. A tax collector would be fluent in Greek.
2. He would also be literate.
3. He would be used to keeping records.
4. He most likely would be able to write in short-hand. Therefore he could have been a note-taker at Jesus teachings.
5. If Levi was a tribal name he would have known about scribal tradition and be familiar with temple practices.
6. He would have been a well-educated scribe in the secular sense. Matthew 13:52 may have been a self-portrait of a tax collector turned disciple.

Matthew's Authorship

There are three basic reasons supporting the traditional view that Matthew wrote the first gospel. They include the following.

Unanimous Tradition

The first gospel was always associated with Matthew. Every text that names an author names Matthew. There is no other candidate. Could they have forgotten so soon after the life of Christ who wrote the most important account of His life? The same holds true for the authorship of the other three gospels. There are no other candidates.

He Is An Unlikely Author

Matthew was not a prominent disciple. He would not have been an obvious choice among the followers of Jesus to write the gospel. The same holds true for Mark and Luke. Like Matthew neither of these men were prominent characters in the New Testament. Why attribute a book to them if they were not the author? John is the only exception for he is one of the main characters of the New Testament.

The Identification Of The Document

The early preservation of the name of the author is another consideration. It was a common literary practice during the time of Christ to preserve the name of the author of a particular work. Scrolls with written text on both sides had tags glued to them which insured the preservation of the author's name. They were attached in such a way that a person could see who authored the scroll without unrolling it. It is the same as modern day title printing on the spine of a book. The gospel scrolls would have had such tags. With more than one gospel circulating about the life of Christ the literary tags had to include the name of the person who wrote the scroll. Matthews' gospel would have a tag to distinguish it from the other gospels.

Possible Internal Evidence Of Authorship

Each gospel has a passage where the author may have identified himself.

1. Matthew may have identified himself in 13:52 "scribe bringing out things old and new"
2. Mark 14:51,52 may be a self-identification. The young man who ran away naked was probably a personal reference to Mark. Also John Mark is called a minister by Luke in Acts 13:5 (Greek huparetas). Luke 1:2 says he derived his written information from those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word (Greek, huparetas). Is he referring to Mark?
3. Luke may have been the unnamed second disciple on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13,18).

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4. John testifies that he was an eyewitness to the events that he recorded (19:35;20:30,31). In 21:24 he identifies himself.

Date

Most modern scholars date Matthew in the last 20 years of the first century A.D. (80-100) for the following reasons:

1. It is generally supposed that Mark's gospel was not written earlier than A.D. 65 and that Matthew used Mark's gospel to compose his work.
2. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is believed to have influenced the language in such passages as 22:7; 23:38; and various parts of chapter 24.
3. The "anti-Jewish" tone suits the period around A.D. 85 when Christians were effectively excluded from the synagogue worship by the insertion of a curse on "Nazarenes and Heretics" into the synagogue liturgy.
4. The gospel is said to reflect too developed theological and church structure to have been written earlier. Matthew is the only gospel writer to use the term church.
5. The phrases "until now" "until today" (11:12; 27:8; 28:15) presuppose something that happened many years before.
6. The warning against false prophets supposedly indicates a late date.
7. The apostles were revered by the people. This happened later in the history of the church after they all had died.

Response

1. The assumption that Matthew used Mark is not universally accepted, nor is the dating of Mark at A.D. 65. In addition, all patristic writers assumed Matthew wrote before Mark. Patristic evidence is likewise unanimous that Matthew wrote his gospel before the early 60's.
2. This argument assumes Jesus could not have foreseen the events in A.D. 70. Furthermore, nothing in the wording of Matthew points to the events as already past. The words of 22:7 do not directly reflect what occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem. The Jewish writer Flavius Josephus writes that the Romans did not burn the city of Jerusalem. The real reason for the late dating is unbelief in Bible prophecy.
3. It is quite possible that the relationship with the Jews as reflected in Matthew's gospel could have come from an earlier time. We know so little about that era.
4. Another subjective argument. This assumes Matthew teaches a formal church structure which is not required by the text (16:17-19; 18:15-20).

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5. Expressions like “until this day” do not necessarily mean 50 or 60 years after the event. It could have been 20 years or less.
6. Paul shows that the false prophets appeared quite early in the history of the church (2 Corinthians 11)
7. Apostles are not so highly revered that Matthew omits or softens derogatory references.

Internal Evidence For An Early Date

Within the gospel itself there are evidences for an early date.

1. Practices connected with the temple (5:23-24; 23:16-22) would hardly be worth including after the temple ceased to exist in A.D. 70.
2. The discussion of the temple tax in 17:24-27 would have been positively misleading after A.D. 70 when the tax was diverted to the upkeep of the temple of Jupiter in Rome.
3. The respectful attitude toward the office of the scribes in 23:2-3 would hardly have been included if the church and synagogue were totally opposed to each other.
4. Clearly the predictions given by Jesus of the destruction of the temple assume the temple is still standing. No reference is made to the fulfillment of His predictions. All references to Jerusalem's destruction are forward looking.
5. Matthew was the favorite gospel of the early church although not written by a prominent apostle. It was immediately accepted as authoritative though no outstanding figure was behind it (e.g. Peter and Mark).
6. Matthew does not seem to show any awareness of the letters of Paul (e.g. resurrection appearances in 1 Corinthians 15).
7. Matthew refers to the Sadducees 7 times-more than all the other gospel writers put together. After A.D. 70 little is heard of the Sadducees.
8. Warnings about not fleeing on the Sabbath would make little sense if temple had been destroyed and nation was in exile (24:20).

Major Emphases In Matthew

Fulfillment

In Jesus, all God's purposes come to fulfillment, everything is related to Him. There are 61 quotations from the Old Testament in Matthew compared to 31 in Mark, 26 in Luke, and 16 in John. Matthew emphasizes that the Old Testament looks forward to Jesus' coming and the Law is fulfilled in His teaching. Jesus, therefore, is the true Israel through whom God's plan for His people now goes forward. History revolves around

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Him. His coming is the turning point from the age of preparation to the age of fulfillment. With Jesus a new age has dawned.

Jesus told the religious leaders that the entire Old Testament was about Him (John 5:39,46). Actually the entire Bible is about Him.

The Old Testament is the Preparation for the Christ (Isaiah 40:3)

The Gospels are the Manifestation of the Christ (John 1:29)

The Book of Acts is the Propagation of Christ's Message (Acts 1:8)

The Letters of Paul are the Explanation of the two comings of Christ (Colossians 1:27)

The Book of Revelation is the Consummation of all things in Christ (Revelation 1:7)

Typology

One of the ways the New Testament is understood is through typology, the study of types. A type can be defined as a shadow cast on the pages of Old Testament history by a truth that is fully revealed in the New Testament. Many Old Testament events have a far-reaching significance, for they speak of something to be fulfilled in the future.

In Matthew, Jesus is the One who fulfills all Scriptural revelation. Many of these fulfillments are typical. Fulfillments are not only concerned about predictions but also about history and religion. These include events that would have no specific reference to the future. For example, the law points to Jesus whose coming fulfilled it (5:17). In chapter 2 Jesus is seen as the new Moses and the True Israel. In chapter 4 the idea of Jesus testing is related to Israel's testing in the wilderness. Chapter 12 offers a series of Old Testament events that set a precedent for Jesus being Lord of the Sabbath. Then we are given the comparison to Jonah and Solomon. The idea is that God is working the same way as He did in the Old Testament times, yet something greater is happening in the ministry of Jesus.

Christology

Who is Jesus according to Matthew?

Jesus Is The Christ

The Messiah was to be the coming King in the line of David. He was the one who would fulfill God's purposes. The Messiah would restore the people to national independence and pre-eminence among the nations. There were different expectations of the Messiah in the first century. The death of Jesus was a puzzle and a total disappointment to those who were looking for a political Messiah who would rule. The angel told Joseph when he announced Jesus' birth that His purpose was to save His people from their sins. This was away from the political idea. Jesus was to liberate people

from their sins, not from Roman rule (which was the popular expectation). Hence, Messiah was a loaded term in the first century and a crucified Messiah was a stumbling block to the Jews.

The Son Of David

The term “Son of David” was a Messianic title. It links Jesus with God’s fulfillment of His plans for Israel. Matthew places emphasis on David in his beginning section (1:1,20).

The Son Of Man

Jesus exclusively uses this title of Himself. None of the gospel writers ever use it of Him. We do not find this title in narrative sections or in any commentary about Jesus. It is Jesus’ own title. In 26:24, He substitutes the term “Christ” with the Son of Man. The phrase may simply “a human being.” In Ezekiel the term means man contrasted with God, almost the idea of “little man.” There is no clear evidence that the term was used as a title in any Jewish literature. The title is derived from Daniel 7:13,14 which speaks of the future glory and triumph of the Son of Man who is a human figure. Jesus used this term with respect to His own rejection, suffering, and humiliation (8:20). Therefore, the term is wide-ranging and the meaning is fixed by Jesus’ own understanding of His unique mission.

King

Matthew shows that Jesus is the true King of the Jews. Jesus fulfills the role of King as the “son of David” the “greater than Solomon” (12:3-4,42). Matthew starts with the royal ancestry of the King (1:1-17). Jesus is contrasted with Herod (2:2) as the real King of the Jews. In 20:21 the disciples look forward to Jesus’ kingdom. Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem fulfills Zechariah’s prophecy of the coming of “your King” (21:4,5). Matthew refers to Jesus as having His own kingship (13:41; 16:28; 19:28; 25:31,34). In 25:31ff. His kingship is described in terms used in the Old Testament for that of God Himself. The climax of the gospel is the declaration of Jesus’ universal rule (28:18).

Son Of God

The language that Jesus uses about Himself as God’s Son is more prominent in John’s gospel than in Matthew. Generally the language used of Jesus as the Son of God occurs in the words of others rather than His own (3:17;17:5). Both Satan (4:3,6) and his demons (8:29) testify to Jesus being the Son of God. As the understanding of Jesus’ disciples began to increase they also used this title of Him (14:33;16:16,17). The full significance of the title comes at the end of the gospel when Jesus is linked with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The coming of Jesus was more than the coming of a man, it was the coming of God (3:3). He is the one who need not repent of sin (3:15,16). Jesus has the armies of heaven at His command (26:53,54). Supernatural things happen at His death and resurrection (27:51-54; 28:2-4). Even during His earthly time He is worshipped as Lord (2:2; 7:21; 8:2).

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W.C. Allen concisely sums up the Christology of Matthew:

Jesus was the Messiah of the Old Testament (1:1), and was therefore descended from David and from Abraham (1:1). His ancestral line rose to monarchical power in the person of David (1:6), lost the royal dignity at the time of the captivity (1:11), but recovered it in the person of Jesus, the anointed Messiah (1:16). Jesus was therefore born as King of the Jews (2:2), entered Jerusalem as its king (21:4-5), and died as a claimant to royal power (27:11, 29, 37, 42). He was born of a virgin, as the Prophet Isaiah had foretold (1:22), by the conception of the Holy Spirit (1:20), so that He could be called God-with-us (1:23), or Son of God (2:15; 3:17; 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 17:5; 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54). At His baptism the Spirit of God came down upon Him; and here, as at the Transfiguration, He was proclaimed by God to be His Son, the Beloved, divinely elected (3:17; 17:5). He therefore spoke of Himself as “Son,” and God as “Father” in a unique sense (11:27; 24:26). As Messiah He fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament. His supernatural birth (1:22), several incidents of His early years (2:5, 15, 17, 23), His public ministry in Galilee (4:14), His ministry of healing (8:17), His avoidance of publicity (12:17), the misunderstanding of His hearers (13:14), His use of parables (13:35), the manner of His entry into Jerusalem (21:4), His betrayal (26:24), His desertion (26:31), His arrest (26:54, 56), and the use to which the money for His betrayal was put (27:9), had all been foretold in the Old Testament. As Son of God, He cast out demons by the Spirit of God (12:28). He preached the near advent of the kingdom of heaven. He performed miracles, chiefly of healing, but He also cast out demons, raised dead persons to life, walked on the water on one occasion, and twice fed the multitudes with a few loaves and fishes. He foretold His death and resurrection, and promised that He would come again . . . to inaugurate the kingdom. He spoke of Himself as the “Son of Man.” As such He had His angels at His command (13:41; 24:31), and would come again in glory with angels (16:27; 24:30) and sit upon the throne of His glory (Allen, pp. lxvi, lxvii).

With these thoughts in mind, let us begin to study the good news according to Matthew . . .

**Matthew
Chapter 1**

The traditional title “Gospel of Matthew” has its origin from the earliest part of the Christian era. Before the middle of the second century we find the name gospel already given to the accounts of the life of Jesus. Justin Martyr wrote: “The apostles, in the memoirs made by them, which are called Gospels.”

The Word Gospel

The word gospel went through a number of stages in the history of its usage. In the older Greek authors such as Homer it meant a “reward for bringing good tidings.” It was also used to speak of a thank offering for good-tidings brought.

In later Greek the word gospel came to mean “the good news itself” (2 Samuel 18:20, 22, 25 in the Septuagint). In 2 Samuel 9:10 the term is used in its earliest sense as a reward for bringing the good news.

The sense that the word gospel means the “good news of God” or the “message of salvation that Christ brings” is found in various places in Matthew (4:23; 24:14; 26:13).

Eventually the term came to denote the books in which the good news about Jesus was presented. In the titles of the gospels the word retains the sense of “good news.”

The earliest manuscripts of Matthew (Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus) have the title, “According to Matthew,” where the word gospel is implied. Later manuscripts read “Gospel according to Matthew.” However, to call it the “Gospel according to Saint Matthew” is not correct as John Broadus notes:

To say “Saint Matthew,” a practice which the many persons retain from Romanist usage, is useless if not improper. No one thinks it irreverent to speak of Moses or Isaiah without any such prefix (Broadus, p. 1).

Hence the title would have the idea of “the good news written by Matthew.”

The English word “Gospel” has its derivation from God and spell meaning “the message of God.”

Matthew’s Introduction To Jesus

Jesus’ public ministry begins at 4:17. In the preceding chapters Matthew introduces Jesus to his readers by answering such questions as: “Who is He?” “How did Jesus enter this world?” and “Where does He ultimately come from?”

The first two chapters explain Jesus' origin while 3:1-4:16 outlines His preparation before He begins His public ministry. The goal of these chapters is to provide Scriptural proof that Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. Craig Keener notes that Matthew's introduction of Jesus was typical of ancient biographies:

Ancient biographies could open with the subject's public vocation, as in Mark, but often began by rehearsing the background of the central character. Such background might include a noble or prominent ancestry (Mt. 1:1-17), virtuous parents (1:18-25), childhood background that introduces themes relevant to the subject's later public activity (2:1-23), the attestation of others to the person's character (3:1-17), including that of the person's adherents (4:18-25), and qualifying tests through which the person's character was proved (4:1-11). Such introductory comments set the tone for the whole of the work that would follow (Keener, p. 51).

The Theme: Fulfillment

Matthew's main concern is to show that Jesus is the One whom the Law and the Prophets wrote about—that their ultimate fulfillment was in Him. Therefore, six times in these opening chapters Matthew writes the formula, "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet" or something similar to that phrase.

The quotations Matthew cites do not relate so much to specific things which Jesus did - they refer to more general characteristics about Him. These include: His name given before His birth (1:22-23), the city in which He was born (2:5-6), His childhood (2:15,17-18,23), and His ministry (4:14-16). The basic framework of Jesus' preparation for the ministry corresponds to the pattern laid down in the Old Testament. Jesus is the true Israel.

The Theme: Son of God

A second theme that runs through Matthew's introduction to Jesus' ministry is that Jesus is the Son of God. This theme will continue to run throughout the entire Gospel. Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit (1:18,20) and is Immanuel, "God with us" (1:23). His identity as the Son of God is the central theme of His testing by the devil (4:1-12).

Thus when the reader comes to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry (4:17) he understands who Jesus is - not just a preacher of God's message, or a great prophet, but that He is the Messiah, and that the entire Old Testament looked forward to His coming. Above all this, Jesus is actually God Himself who became a man.

As we have mentioned, Matthew's style of writing goes directly to the point. He gives us only the basic facts of Jesus' birth, the visit of the Magi, and the geographical movements of His family. The references are for a specific purpose - to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament history and prophecy.

The Genealogy of Jesus (1:1-17) [Luke 3:23-38]

A genealogy may seem to us as a strange way to begin a book, but it was very important to the Jews. When the Old Testament is studied it becomes obvious that genealogies were vital to them.

After the children of Israel conquered the Promised Land, it was importance to determine their place of residency. God had already allocated certain land for each tribe, family and each father's house (Numbers 26:52-56; 33:54). If a person settled in a territory other than which they were supposed to they could be called a deserter (Judges 12:4). When property was transferred, under certain circumstances, it was essential that one could establish their genealogy (Ruth 3:9, 12, 13; 4:1-10).

In the kingdom of Judah only those descendants of King David could ascend to the throne (1 Kings 11:36; 15:4).

After the nation returned from the Babylonian captivity anyone who claimed to be a priest had to prove his priestly descent. If not, they were not allowed to hold office.

These searched among their ancestral registration, but they could not be located; therefore they were considered unclean and excluded from the priesthood (Ezra 2:62).

To summarize, genealogical material is found in the following chapters in the Old Testament: Genesis 5,10, 11, 22, 25, 29, 30, 35, 46; Exodus 6; Numbers 1, 2, 7, 10, 13, 26, 34; Joshua 7, 13; Ruth 4; 1 Samuel 1, 14; 2 Samuel 3, 5, 23; 1 Kings 4; 1 Chronicles 1-9, 11, 12, 15, 23-37; 2 Chronicles 23, 29; Ezra 2, 7, 8, 10; Nehemiah 3, 7, 10, 11, 12.

All this shows that the genealogies were very significant to the Jews during the Old Testament period. They reminded the people that God was in control of the arrangement of marriages and the children produced from these marriages. Sometimes the genealogy explained why an individual behaved a certain way (e.g. Moses descended from lawbreakers like Reuben and Simeon).

They were also very meaningful to the people living in Jesus' day. The genealogical records, which were maintained by the Sanhedrin, were used by the people to guarantee purity of descent. The first century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus began his autobiography by listing his genealogy. The rabbi Hillel could trace his ancestry all the way back to King David. Herod the Great, who was half Jew and half Edomite, so embarrassed by the fact that his name was not in the official genealogies, ordered their destruction. This, he concluded, would mean that no one could claim a superior pedigree than him!

The fact that Matthew could trace the genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham would have been very important to the Jews. Matthew, writing mainly to Jewish Christians, begins his gospel with Jesus' genealogy to present Him

as the Messiah—the Son of David. The genealogy he records does the following:

1. It establishes Jesus as the long-awaited greater Son of David—the Messiah—by emphasizing the place of David in the genealogy. It was through David that the Messianic king would come (2 Samuel 7:16).
2. The genealogy also established the link between Jesus with Abraham—the one to whom the promises were originally given. Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise that in one of the descendants of Abraham the entire world would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3).
3. Matthew traces Jesus' descent from the royal line of Judah showing that Jesus is the rightful "King of the Jews."
4. Matthew records certain unusual features in the royal line. This sets the stage for Jesus' own unique birth.
5. The history of the Jewish people is organized into three groups of fourteen generations. Each group marks a pivotal time in the history of the chosen people. At the end of each group of fourteen names, some important event took place. The birth of Jesus is that important event in the last list of fourteen. This shows that everything that had previously happened in their history was looking forward to His coming. These three groups, therefore, represent the three great turning points of Israel's history.

Therefore the genealogy is a vital part of Matthew's introduction to the character and mission of Jesus. We should also note that the genealogies in Matthew and Luke are the only two existing Messianic genealogies. None other exists.

The references in Matthew and Luke are not the only New Testament references to genealogies (1 Timothy 1:4; Titus 3:9).

The plan of the genealogy is obviously selective, carefully arranged into three groups of fourteen names. It is designed to make three names stand out Abraham, David, and Jesus.

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

The book of the genealogy or "The book of the history," or "The book of the origin." This contains an allusion to the phrase used in Genesis 2:4; and 5:1 in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament). It is translated there as "the book of genealogy of" or "the record of the history of" or something like that.

On these two occasions in Genesis, the phrase does not merely introduce a genealogy; it also mentions both the process of the creation of the universe and the creation of man. It is therefore possible that Matthew

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begins his gospel with this phrase as a deliberate reference to Jesus - the One who introduces a new era for both mankind and the world.

Furthermore, there is evidence that the word *geneleos* "genesis" (translated here as genealogy) was already used as the title of the Book of Genesis in the Septuagint. Matthew may well have used it as a title of his book in which he would write about the new genesis - the new beginning brought about by Jesus Christ.

One question that arises is, "How do we understand the phrase, "The book of the genealogy?" What does it refer to? Five solutions have been offered:

- (1) It is the heading for entire gospel. Thus it means the, "book of the history of Jesus Christ." The word translated "book" is *biblos* - the normal Greek word for book or scroll. This word was later used to specifically refer to a "sacred book." It is argued that this makes it unlikely it would be used of a short section. Therefore, from the first word, Matthew's gospel is presented almost as Holy Scripture by analogy with the Old Testament.
- (2) It refers to 1:1-4:16 up to the beginning of His public ministry, where it states, "From that time on, Jesus began to preach."
- (3) The reference is to the first two chapters of Matthew which chronicle His birth. Since the superscription is formed on the analogy of Genesis 2:4; and 5:1, Matthew may have intended to introduce the entire account of Jesus origin in chapter one and chapter two by use of this heading.
- (4) The heading refers to the first chapter only which prepares for the birth narrative in chapter two.
- (5) The reference is only to verses 1-17 which takes us to the actual beginning of the origin of Jesus' earthly life. The narrative has a different heading in verse 18. Therefore the opening heading refers only to the first seventeen verses.

The best answer to this question seems to be either solution number one or number five.

of Jesus This phrase speaks of the origin of Jesus Himself. Jesus is the Latin form of His name. The Greek form is *yaysous*, and the Hebrew is *yeshua*, a shorter form of *yehoshua* meaning, "The Lord (Yahweh) is salvation." It was a fairly common name among Jews in the first century. We find a number of people with that name in the writings of Josephus as well as the Septuagint. The term "Jesus" is only used in narratives about Him. No one in Matthew ever addresses Him by His given name "Jesus."

Christ He is the Christ, the Messiah (the anointed one). This is from the Hebrew word *Meshiach* - one who was anointed by the Holy Spirit for the task of saving His people (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:8; Hebrews 1:9).

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Jesus was anointed to be the main prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15; Isaiah 55:4; Acts 3:22; 7:37); the only High Priest (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 10:12,14; and the King (Psalm 2:6; Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:5; 28:18; Luke 1:33).

According to the Old Testament, the Messiah would be: the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15); a descendant of Abraham (Genesis 22:18), from the line of Judah (Genesis 49:10; and from the house of David (2 Samuel 7:12,13).

This is the only place for certain where Matthew uses the full name “Jesus Christ” (1:18 and 16:21 have variant readings in the Greek text). There is a question whether this is a proper name (Jesus Christ) or a name and a title (Jesus the Christ). The title “Christ” (Messiah) eventually became a proper name because it was so often used by Christians to refer to Jesus. However, this did not occur in Jesus’ lifetime.

We should also note that the genealogies of the Old Testament and in Jewish tradition always take their name from the first name on the list (as does Luke). Here the emphasis is different, it is on the last member of the list, Jesus.

the son of David By the first century, this phrase had become a title for the coming Messiah—the one who would bring in an eternal kingdom based upon righteousness. The Messiah would occupy the throne of David based upon God’s promise (2 Samuel 7:14-17). This was known as the Davidic Covenant. Matthew makes it clear that Jesus is that promised Son of David.

The term also has the idea of a mighty warrior who would conquer Israel’s enemies and set up God’s kingdom in Jerusalem. Leon Morris writes, “the militaristic associations may account for the sparing use of the title among Christians” (Morris, p. 20).

Matthew uses the phrase most frequently when people ask to Jesus for help (9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31) but he also uses it in the story of the triumphal entry (21:9,15). This indicates he is aware of the royal association.

The fact that Jesus descended from David is asserted in the New Testament (Luke 1:27, 32; Acts 2:30ff.; 13:23; Romans 1:3, 2 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 7:14; Revelation 5:5; 22:16).

the son of Abraham Jesus is also aligned with Abraham who was the first recipient of the specific promise of a Messianic King. Jesus was Abraham’s son par excellence (John 8:58) greater than Abraham.

Abraham, by faith, moved out of Ur of the Chaldees to the land of promise. God’s covenant with Abraham set the nation Israel apart in a special sense as His chosen people. Therefore, Abraham’s name carries the idea of God’s promise and His ultimate fulfillment. Jesus, we discover, is the true seed of Abraham where God’s promises are fulfilled.

In addition, the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3) speaks of the blessing through Abraham for “all families of the earth.” In Jesus, through the line of Abraham, that promise is fulfilled. This comes to fulfillment in the climatic passage of Matthew’s gospel where the command is given to “make disciples of all nations” (28:19). Therefore, we find universal blessings at the beginning and end of this gospel.

Jesus, therefore, as a “son of Abraham” is a true Jew, and as a “son of David” is the Christ. It is also possible that the phrase “son of Abraham” may have been a Messianic title at that time.

The genealogy goes back no further than Abraham because it was written for the Jews. Luke on the other hand, writing to a Gentile audience takes his genealogy all the way back to Adam—the first man.

The word “son” is used in this verse as a figure of speech called synecdoche (the exchange of one idea for another associated idea). This is where one relationship is put for, and includes others. Thus Christ is called the Son of David—the word “son” being used in a wider significance. Hence David is called father (Luke 1:32) though Christ is neither David’s son nor is David in any physical sense His father. Other examples of this figure of speech are found in 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30,31; 21:9,15; 22:42.

Matt. 1:2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers

Matthew’s first list of 14 names (vs. 2-6a) agrees exactly with 1 Chronicles 1:28,34; 2:1-15) and the list in Ruth 4:18-22.

Abraham The genealogy begins historically with Abraham because he was the first man specially called of God to separate himself from his people. He was the beginning of the salvation history of the nation that would come from his descendants—the man to whom the national promises were first given.

fathered Isaac, The word translated “fathered” simply represents the action of a male parent—it does not necessarily represent literal paternity. Therefore, the next person mentioned after the parent is not necessarily one in the immediate family. The word can be used of any descendant (see 3:9). Hendriksen makes an appropriate comment:

The verb refers here to the father’s acquisition of offspring by depositing seed. Physical (*his*) descent is indicated, whether from father to son, as in the case of father Abraham and son Isaac, or father via son to grandson or later physical descendant. It must be considered deplorable that elegant modern English has no easy equivalent for the verb used in the original . . . The rendering begat (A.V.; A.R.V [American Revised Version]) is definitely archaic. The rendering was the father of (Beck, Williams, Phillips, R.S.V., N.E.B. etc.) shifts the emphasis from the relation of a past event, as in the original, to the description of a past state . . . Perhaps the least objectionable

renderings into English, though not a single one is completely satisfactory, are the following:

“To Abraham was born Isaac (N.A.S.) “Abraham begot Isaac” (see, however the footnote on this in Williams’ translation). “Abraham became the father of Isaac,” favored by L.N.T. [Lexicon of the New Testament] (A. and G.) [Arndt and Gingrich], p. 154.

Between these three it is difficult to make a choice (Hendriksen, p. 105, note 119).

Isaac fathered Jacob, Though Jacob was the youngest of the twins (Esau was the other brother) God chose the elder to serve the younger (see Romans 9). Appropriately enough, Matthew begins Jesus’ genealogy with the record of a supernatural birth - Isaac and end with another supernatural birth—Jesus. They are both supernatural but not identical.

Note that Ishmael is not mentioned, only the Messianic line (Galatians 4:23; Romans 4:19; Hebrews 11:11,12).

Jacob fathered Judah Matthew emphasizes that of the twelve possible ancestors of the Messiah, the royal line was chosen to be only through the line Judah (Genesis 49:10). Why was Judah chosen? Reuben was the firstborn, Judah was the fourth. It is not determined by age or human merit, but by God’s sovereign choice (Romans 9:16).

and his brothers. This is the first break in regular rhythm of the genealogy. Jesus is the fulfillment of all that was promised to the twelve tribes.

Matt.1:3 Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Aram

Judah fathered Perez and Zerah The two individuals, Perez and Zerah, are both listed rather than just one of them because Tamar was the mother of these twins born out of wedlock (Genesis 38:27-30). The Old Testament traced the royal line of Judah to Perez (Ruth 4:12,18ff.). The phrase “son of Perez” is a Rabbinical expression for the Messiah.

by Tamar, Tamar was a Canaanite who seduced Judah her father-in-law (Genesis 38) Her name is an addition by Matthew to the Old Testament genealogies. Similar additions by Matthew include: the special reference to Rahab and Ruth (vs. 5) and the wife of Uriah, Bathsheba, in vs. 6.

Tamar is the first of four women to be mentioned in the genealogy (five if we count Mary). The fact that women are listed in the genealogy is an irregularity seeing that they had no legal rights in Jesus’ day. Thus the mentioning of them in Jesus’ legal genealogy is indeed something extraordinary. Bruce adds:

Mention of the mother wholly unnecessary and unusual from a genealogical point of view, and in this case one would say . . . impolitic, reminding of a hardly readable story (Gen. 38:13-16). It is the first of four

references to mothers in the ancestry of Jesus concerning whom one might have expected discreet silence (Bruce, pp. 62, 63).

The mention of a mother alongside a father occurs in Old Testament genealogies (1 Chronicles 1:32; 2:17-21, 24, 26, etc.) The mention of Tamar is derived directly from 1 Chronicles 2:4.

Perez fathered Hesrom, Except for the mention in Genesis, we know nothing about Hesrom.

Hesrom fathered Aram. “Aram” is the reading of the Greek text and the KJV. It is rendered with the shortened spelling “Ram” in some translations (see 1 Chronicles 2:10 (LXX). Like Hesrom, Aram was unknown to men but important to God.

Matt. 1:4 Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon

Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab was the father of Elisheba who married Aaron (Exodus 6:23).

Amminadab father Nahshon, During the wilderness wanderings Nahshon was the leader of Judah’s tribe (Numbers 1:7; 1 Chronicles 2:10). They were encamped toward sunrise (Numbers 2:3) as representative of the tribe he would be the first to offer a sacrifice (Numbers 7:12-17). His tribe led the march (Numbers 10:4).

The incompleteness of the list is seen that only two names appear between Hesrom and Nahshon—a period of 400 years. Therefore each of these four names represent a century.

Nahshon fathered Salmon. The Old Testament provides no information as to the remainder of the names in vs. 3-4 (from Perez to Salmon).

Matt. 1:5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse

Salmon fathered Boaz whose mother was Rahab, It seems that Matthew writes what the Old Testament does not state—that the mother of Boaz was Rahab the prostitute who hid the spies in Jericho (Joshua 2:1-21). The reference to Rahab has apparently been added to the list by Matthew since she does not appear on any Old Testament genealogical lists (see 1 Chronicles 2:12; Ruth 4:21). If this does refer to Rahab the prostitute, there is a chronological problem, for she appears several generations or two centuries too late. Rahab does figure prominently in the New Testament (Hebrews 11:35; James 2:25). In Jewish literature Rahab is said to have married Joshua.

Some have argued for another Rahab unknown in Jewish literature. However, further support of Rahab the prostitute is seen by the tainted character of at least two of the other women in the genealogy. Our information is insufficient to be certain as to her exact identity.

Matthew leaves some of the names out (see Ezra 7:3; 1 Chronicles 6:7-9). It is clear also from the next two lists. Matthew's interest is in Christology, not chronology.

Boaz fathered Jobed out of Ruth, The woman of faith from Moab (Ruth 1:4) becomes an ancestor to the Messiah. The Moabites were denounced by the prophets Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah. In Deuteronomy 23:3, a Moabite, an illegitimate son, and an Ammonite are forbidden to enter the congregation until the tenth generation.

Jobed fathered Jesse. Jesse was David's father as the next verse will indicate. Isaiah 11:1 says the Messiah would be from the line of Jesse.

Matt. 1:6 Jesse was the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon (his mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah)

Note on a Variant Reading: After the second time David is used in the verse, many manuscripts (TR, MT) read the king.

Jesse fathered David the king. Matthew's addition of the word "the king" reinforces the link between David and Jesus. "It serves the same purpose as if David had been written in capital letters" (Bruce p. 63). David was the first rightful king of Israel and the one in whom the line of Judah first achieved royalty.

In both verses 1 and 17 David is emphasized as a key figure in Jesus' genealogy. The royal line of David, which was lost during the exile, is now regained by Jesus the Messiah.

David fathered Solomon At this point, Luke's genealogy passes through Nathan, another son of David.

There is a Jewish tradition that seems to have recognized a double line for the Messiah. The Targum (commentary) on Zechariah 12:10 reads: "The descendants of king Solomon of the house of David mourn . . . and the descendants of the prophet Nathan, son of David."

The problem of the genealogy of Jesus is dealt with at the end of this chapter.

out of the wife of Uriah. Matthew deliberately leaves out the name of Bathsheba. Perhaps he does this to call attention to Uriah's righteousness in contrast to David adultery and murder. Bathsheba is mentioned in the genealogy of 1 Chronicles 3:5.

The second list of fourteen names (verses 6b-11) is in exact agreement with 1 Chronicles 3:10-15 except for the omission of three kings.

Matt. 1:7 Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa

Note on a variant reading. Some manuscripts have Asaph instead of Asa. The same variant occurs in verse 8. However, Asaph was a variant spelling of Asa.

Solomon fathered Rehoboam, This was the beginning of the downfall of the monarchy. Rehoboam followed in the folly of his father Solomon and made unwise decisions that eventually split the kingdom (1 Kings 12:14).

Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah (1 Kings 15:2,3) walked in the sins of his father.

Abijah fathered Asa From verses 7-12 the list follows 1 Chronicles 3:10-17 and Ezra 3:2. 2 Chronicles 14:11 records Asa's prayer to God.

Matt. 1:8 Asa fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram, Joram fathered Uzziah

Asa fathered Jehoshaphat 2 Chronicles 20:5

Jehoshaphat fathered Joram, 2 Chronicles 21:6 tells us Joram married Ahab's daughter.

Joram fathered Uzziah. Uzziah 2 Chronicles 26:19

Matt. 1:9 Uzziah was the father of Jotham. Jotham was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah

Uzziah fathered Jotham, See 2 Chronicles 27:3,4. Three kings are omitted here (Ahaziah, Jehoash, and Amaziah) the reason for which omission is unstated. It is not unusual in genealogies to leave out names (i.e. Ezra leaves out the name of his own father! Compare Ezra 7:1-5 with 1 Chronicles 6:3-15).

However these three descended from Athaliah who attempted to wipe out the Davidic royal line (2 Kings 11). They had a curse put upon them through Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. She became the wife of Joram and the mother of Ahaziah; if the curse lasted to the fourth generation (as it seems from the narrative in 2 Chronicles 22-25) it would have included the three kings missing from

Matthew's list. The same Greek form is used in some manuscripts of LXX for both Ahaziah and Uzziah (Azariah).

Jotham fathered Achaz, 2 Chronicles 28:22.

Achaz fathered Hezekiah. 2 Kings 19:15-19. Asa, Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah were three reformers.

Matt. 1:10 Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon, Amon fathered Josiah

Note on a Variant Reading: Some manuscripts read Amos instead of Amon (TR and MT). The same variant is found in verse 11.

Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, 2 Kings 21:11-12.

Manasseh fathered Amon, 2 Kings 21:9-23.

Amon fathered Josiah. 2 Kings 2:22.

Matt. 1:11 and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon

Note on a Variant Reading. After the words “Josiah fathered” some manuscripts have Jehoiakim, and Jehoiakim fathered. The addition of these names brings the text of Matthew into harmony with the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 3:15,16. If this was part of the original text then there would be fifteen names in the second list instead of fourteen. No modern translation accepts these words as original.

Josiah fathered Jeconiah and his brothers 2 Kings 24:9,12, 15. This verse presents a number of problems. One problem is that Jehoiakim is not mentioned. If he were, the genealogy would then equal fourteen in this third list, as in the first two lists. Various explanations have been offered as to why his name does not appear here as it does in the Old Testament genealogies. Begot is linked here with the grandfather.

Another problem is that Jechoniah or Jehoiachin is not listed in the Old Testament as having any brothers (see questions at the end of chapter for possible explanations).

This reference is thought to indicate that after the exile, there was more than one Davidic family which might have inherited the monarchy.

at the time of the captivity to Babylon. This brings us to a major division in the genealogy—the Babylonian captivity. This was the low point in the history of the nation with the destruction of both the city of Jerusalem and the temple.

Matt. 1:12 And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel

After the exile to Babylon After the beginning of the exile, not after the exile was over. Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) was the first king to be deported to Babylon (2 Kings 24:15) and receives the title “the captive” (1 Chronicles 3:17).

Jechoniah fathered Shealtiel, The Greek text here as well, as the King James Version, reads Salathiel. Most modern English translations use the Old Testament form of the name (see Ezra 3:2).

Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel is the man who led the people back to build the second temple.

Matt. 1:13 and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor

Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor. Further names in the list

Matt. 1:14 Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud

Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Akim, Akim fathered Eliud. More names

Matt. 1:15 Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob

Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob. We have no known source for Matthew's third group, which apart from the first three names (found in 1 Chronicles 3:17-19, but not consecutively) is completely unknown until the names of Joseph and Jesus. The names from Abiud to Jacob the father of Joseph are not known to us from any other source.

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

Note on Variant Readings: Some Greek manuscripts and the Old Latin version read Joseph, to whom was betrothed the virgin Mary who fathered Jesus. This was an attempt to make the virgin birth more precise. The Sinaitic Syriac version says Joseph, to whom was betrothed Mary the virgin, begat Jesus. This could be used to deny the virgin birth only if begat (was the father of) refers to actual physical paternity and not, as elsewhere in the genealogy, to descent that was legally recognized. All modern translations favor the reading above. A few manuscripts read the Son of God after Christ.

Note that when the RSV was released in 1946 there was a note in the margin that indicates this was a legitimate alternative reading.

And Jacob fathered Joseph Jacob was possibly his adoptive father. The word translated "fathered" can refer to a relationship that is not genetic (see 1 Corinthians 4:15; Philemon 10). The same metaphor of father and son was used of a rabbi and his pupil (cf. Psalm 2:7). Joseph is important in his genealogy, not as the physical father of Jesus but as his legal parent.

the husband of Mary, Joseph is called the husband of Mary though they were not married when Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit. She would, however, still be considered his lawful wife during the period of betrothal. Matthew shows that Jesus is the legitimate son of Joseph, Mary's husband, at His birth and thus the heir to the Davidic throne.

of whom The pronoun is unambiguously feminine referring back to Mary not Joseph. Clearly Jesus was born from Mary, not Joseph.

Jesus was born, The fact that Jesus was conceived by a virgin mother without the agency of Joseph is repeatedly stated throughout this section. It is the basis for the introduction of the quotation in verses 22,23.

After Joseph, the regular formula “fathered” is dropped. The nature of the genealogy shows that it is the legal, not necessarily physical descent that it in mind. But when Mary is reached, the formula is altered. It clearly indicates physical birth rather than legal descent.

The virgin conception of Jesus is assumed as a known fact by Matthew. Interestingly, there is no attempt by him to argue for it or describe it.

An apologetic element may be found with the surprise of Joseph at Mary’s pregnancy, his abstaining from sexual relations with her before the birth of Jesus, the angel’s explanation that Jesus was of divine origin, and the biblical basis for the virgin conception. Twice Matthew will emphasize that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit. The genealogy is intended to be that of Jesus’ legal ancestry not his physical descent.

the one who is called Christ. This is not implying doubt but rather showing that His claim was legitimate seeing that He was a descendant of David. Christ is His title. Christ is the Greek form of the Hebrew Meshiach “Messiah”

Matt. 1:17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ

Therefore all the generations from Abraham He represents the beginning of the chosen people and the promises of God to them.

until David Until the beginning of the monarchy.

are fourteen generations, We will have this phrase repeated three times.

and from David until the Babylonian captivity fourteen generations; From the monarchy until the exile.

and from the Babylonian captivity until the Christ fourteen generations. This is from the exile until the Messiah.

Matthew, in verse 17, gives us a brief summary of the preceding 16 verses. The technical name for this figure of speech is symperasma (or concluding summary). It refers to an addition of a conclusion by way of summary. It is made up of two Greek words sun “together with” and peraiioo “to carry over” or “across.” Therefore the word means “to conclude along with” or “end together.” It is used when that which has been said is briefly summed up. Other examples of this figure of speech can be found in John 10:30 and Hebrews 11:39.

This is the first example of Matthew’s tendency to arrange his material in groups, (usually in groups of three or seven). As we can see, the genealogy

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is arranged in three groups of fourteen (two times seven). This would make is convenient for memory in oral use.

The three main points of the genealogy are the three main events of Israel's history - Abraham, David, and the captivity. Matthew's purpose is to emphasize the two major turning points in Israel's history and of David's kingship. His kingship was lost at the Babylonian captivity. Now with the arrival of Jesus, the prophesied Son of David, that kingship has reached its appointed goal. The genealogies show the period of preparation is now complete and the Messiah has come.

Therefore, in the first list we are shown the origin of David's house, the second list the rise and decline of David's house and the third list the eclipse of David's house. However, at the end of this list the fulfillment of the promise to the house of David took place. In David, the family of Abraham attained royalty, they lost it at the captivity, in Christ it was restored.

The different groups are in three unequal historical periods of approximately 750, 400, and 600 years. The reason for the number "fourteen generations" plainly had significance for Matthew, but is not explained for us. This has led to various theories:

1. There were fourteen High Priests from Aaron to the establishment of Solomon's Temple, and from Solomon's Temple to Jaddua, the last High Priest mentioned in Scripture, the number is also fourteen.
2. The Hebrew numerical value of David's name, when calculated, comes up 14 (D=4, W=6, D=4). This, however, was probably not what Matthew intended since the Gospel was written in Greek and the numerics of David's name in Hebrew would not be unknown to those reading in Greek. This practice, known as Gematria, has only clear example of it in the New Testament (Revelation 13:17-18).
3. Some have thought that Matthew devised the concept of three fourteen's when he found fourteen names in the first group. To conform the other two groups to the pattern he simply abbreviated their lists.

Whatever the reason, Matthew intends to show that behind Israel's history is God's design. This is why he has structured the genealogy into three pivotal periods. The genealogy testifies to both the high and low points of the nation.

The Explanation of Jesus' Origin (1:18-25)

The genealogy has prepared us for this next section. That which the genealogy implied is now clearly taught. Matthew now explains the supernatural origin of Jesus as well as His purpose for coming to the earth—to save His people from their sins. This section, therefore, is a justification of his genealogy. It shows that while His birth was supernatural, Jesus still can rightly be regarded as the legitimate son of Joseph and thus the heir to David's throne.

The virgin conception, along with the genealogy, answer the charges about Jesus' humble birth and his actual origin (13:57-58; Mark 6:3; Luke 4:22; John 7:27, 40, 41; 8:41,48).

These verses do not relate to the actual birth of Jesus but rather explain His origin (or virginal conception). The story is told from Joseph's standpoint rather than that of Mary (as Luke does). Interestingly, Matthew assumes his readers know who Joseph and Mary are, since there is no attempt to explain anything about them. We will learn two things about the child from this section—The child is Immanuel (God with us) and His name (or purpose) is Jesus—the One who is to save.

Matt. 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read Jesus rather than Jesus Christ. There is also a variant reading found in the word translated origin. The Greek manuscripts read either *genesis* or *gennasis*. Both terms mean “birth” but *genesis* also means “creation,” “generation,” and “genealogy.” It is the same Greek word found in 1:1. *Gennasis* has a stricter meaning of “engendering.” It eventually became the customary word in early Christian literature to refer to the birth of Christ. *Gennasis* is found as the reading of TR and MT.

Now the origin of Jesus Christ was as follows: The use of the same Greek word *genesis* picks up the idea of “origin” found in 1:1. This suggests that the record of origin now reaches its goal. The position of the words “of Jesus Christ” in Greek makes them emphatic. His birth is the focus of attention.

After his mother Mary had been pledged to Joseph, Matthew records that Jesus' conception took place when Mary was betrothed or pledged to Joseph. Betrothal was a different matter than our western idea of engagement.

Jewish weddings involved three separate phases. First, there was the engagement that was often arranged by the parents while the couple were still children.

The second phase was the betrothal. In Jewish law the betrothal period lasted about a year. It was a formal binding contract entered into before witnesses. Therefore in a restricted sense they were married. It gave the man legal rights over the girl and was terminated only by death (which left the betrothed a widow) or by the formal process of divorce as for a full marriage. If, for example, the girl had been guilty of adultery during the betrothal period she would face the penalty for adultery.

In addition, if either of the parties did not want to go through with the marriage a divorce was required (Deuteronomy 22:24). During this period the man was legally called her husband (see verses 16,19,20,24) yet the

couple did not live together during the betrothal period and did not engage in sexual relations. Betrothal usually took place when the girl was between 12 and 13. The same word for betrothal is used of Mary in Luke 1:27; 2:5.

The third part was the marriage proper which took place about a year later. The marriage was complete when the husband took the betrothed to his home in a second public ceremony (vs. 24; cf. 25:1-13); thus they came together and sexual intercourse could begin.

but before they came together, The verb used here denotes the consummation of the marriage. There is no evidence that it was used for the marriage ceremony itself in which the bride was brought to the bridegroom. Luke agrees with Matthew that Mary and Joseph did not have sexual relations before the birth of Jesus (see 1:25). This statement again emphasizes that the father of Jesus was not Joseph.

she was found to be with child This does not mean that she was “found out.” Rather it became obvious to all that she was going to have a baby.

from the Holy Spirit The divine origin of Mary’s baby is now asserted. Luke also stresses that the Holy Spirit was the agent in Jesus’ conception (1:35). The reference to the Holy Spirit shows that God is about to act through the child.

In the Old Testament the Spirit of God appears as the agent of God’s activity, especially in creation and the giving of life (Genesis 1:2; Ezekiel 37:1-14; etc.). The Old Testament idea that God’s Spirit will bring in the Messianic age (Isaiah 11:2; 42:1; 61:1; Joel 2:28; etc.) is also in view.

The relationship between Jesus’ divine sonship and the Holy Spirit is evident at two other key points in His life (His baptism 3:16-17 and His resurrection Romans 1:4).

The fact that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned that often in the first three gospels underscores the importance of this reference. Just as the Spirit of God was active in the creation of the world, so He is active in its renewal through the Messiah.

Matt. 1:19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly

Joseph her husband, Joseph is called her husband though the last part of the process, the marriage ceremony, has not taken place.

being a righteous man, His righteousness is in the sense of him being conscientiousness in his observance of the law. He was “in the right” before the Law (Deuteronomy 22:13-21). The same word is used of Zacharias and Elizabeth (Luke 1:6)

and yet not willing, This phrase could have one of two possible meanings depending upon the translation of the participle.

1. “and yet not willing.” As a good Jew he could show his zeal for the law if he made her a public disgrace. Though the law called for this, he decided not to do it.

2. “and therefore not willing.” Because he was a righteous man he was not willing to disgrace her. Since he was morally upright he would not shame her.

Though both translations are possible, most commentators feel the first possibility has the most going for it considering the times in which they were living.

His righteousness is set against his own wishes. Joseph as a just, or a law abiding man, could have divorced her by an accusation of adultery resulting in a public trial.

to expose her to public disgrace This refers to making the divorce public rather than doing it privately. Joseph was unwilling to put her to public shame (same word as Colossians 2:15 “make a public spectacle”). The word *deigmatizo* means to “expose” or “humiliate.” A *deigma* is a “specimen” or an “example.”

desired to divorce her quietly. “Her” is in the emphatic position in Greek.

The Mosaic law stated that the man was to divorce his wife if he found something indecent in her (Deuteronomy 24:1). This was Joseph’s legal obligation according to Scripture. Though Joseph did not want to expose her as an adulteress neither did he want to marry one who appeared to be guilty of sin. In the Old Testament the penalty for unchastity before marriage was stoning. However, by the time of Jesus, divorce, based on Deuteronomy 24:1, was the rule. Death by stoning was probably not insisted upon in the New Testament era (see John 8:3-11). This led him to consider the alternative of a formal divorce proceeding in relative privacy between two witnesses (see Deuteronomy 24:1). It is also possible that he intended to dispense with the witnesses altogether.

McNeile notes.

A betrothed girl was a widow if her fiancée died and this whether the man had ‘taken’ her to his house or not. After betrothal, therefore, but before marriage, the man was legally ‘husband’ (Genesis 29:21; Deuteronomy 22:23) hence an informal canceling of betrothal was impossible: the man had to give the woman a writ and pay a fine (McNeile, p. 7,8).

Matt. 1:20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

But after he had considered these things, There was a struggle between his legal conscience and his love for Mary. But as Joseph was planning to proceed with the divorce he was divinely interrupted. Like Abraham (Genesis 22:11), Joseph was supernaturally hindered from injuring the One in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed.

behold, This expression is used a number of times in Matthew. Some modern translations completely ignore it while others always translate it with an English word such as behold, lo, or something like it. The word is used to call attention to the fact that something vivid is about to happen. Consequently, whenever we see it we find either an important character introduced or an important subject!

the angel of the Lord The angelic appearance to Mary, as recorded in Luke's Gospel, is not the same event that Matthew records. Each of them had a separate visitation from an angel. In Luke 1:19, 26 the angel is named (Gabriel) while in Matthew he is simply called the angel of the Lord here and the other times he appears (2:13,19)

In the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord appeared on several prominent occasions (Genesis 16:17 ff.; 22:11; Exodus 3:2) The word angel simply means "messenger" and can refer to a human being (see Luke 7:24) as well as one of God's created "spirit beings" (Hebrews 1:7,14). In the Old Testament it sometimes refers to the Lord Himself in a temporary "theophany" or "activity on the earth." On occasion, the angel of the Lord may refer to the Holy Spirit. F.F. Bruce writes:

This section of the Philip narrative [Acts 8:26-40] is reminiscent here and there of the story of Elijah, who was apt to be moved from one place to another at short notice by the Spirit of Yahweh; cf. 1 K. 18:12; 2 K. 1:3; 2:16. Moreover, in this section as it is in the story of Elijah, it is difficult to distinguish between the angel of the Lord from the Spirit of the Lord (vv. 29, 39) (F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Revised Edition, Eerdmans, 1990, p. 225).

appeared to him in a dream The communicating of God's instructions in a dream is emphasize repeatedly in Matthew's story of Jesus' birth (2:12,13,19,22). All but one of dreams are given to Joseph (the other is to the Magi). The only other dream recorded in Matthew is to Pilate's wife (27:19).

Three of these dreams involve the angel of the Lord (here, 2:13,19). This same angel appears again at the end of the gospel (28:2). These appearances emphasize that God has supernaturally directed Jesus' birth, childhood and resurrection.

God often used dreams to reveal His will. In Scripture they often appear in clusters— during the period of the Patriarchs, the time of Daniel, and in Matthew's account of Jesus' birth.

saying, "Joseph, son of David," This is the only place in the gospels where this designation is applied to someone other than Jesus. The form in which

Joseph is addressed summarizes the purpose of the genealogy—Joseph is legally connected to David. The title also seems to confirm that the genealogy is that of Joseph's rather than Mary's.

It has been observed that Joseph had certain things in common with his Old Testament namesake: both were righteous, both were influenced by dreams, and both were forced to journey into Egypt.

do not ever fear Don't be afraid now or in the future. There should be no hesitating.

to take Mary as your wife, Joseph is instructed to enter into the full marriage relationship with Mary. This would mean going through with the marriage ceremony. It was essential for Joseph to complete the marriage in order to establish legal Davidic lineage for the child about to be born. Jesus would become the legal son of Joseph and would be reckoned as descending from David though Scripture makes it clear that He was not actually Joseph's son.

for that which is conceived in her Note that the Greek word referring to Jesus translated "that which" is in the neuter gender. Grammatical gender is not equivalent to personal gender. For example, the Greek word for "Spirit" (pneuma) is in the neuter gender while in Hebrew (ruach) it is in the feminine gender. Another example of where the neuter refers to things personal include Luke 19:10 "that which was lost"—that refers to sinners both male and female.

is from the Holy Spirit. The angels imparts to Joseph information that had already been given to Mary (Luke 1:35)—the power of the Holy Spirit is the source of Mary's conception. The idea that a virgin would conceive a child would have been very startling to Joseph for a virgin conception was not something that was part of the first century Jewish belief. The Jews were not looking for their Messiah to be virginally conceived. The fact that the origin of the child is from the Holy Spirit underscores the passive role of both Joseph and Mary in the conception of Jesus. God is the one who initiated all the action. This would have comforted and encouraged Joseph seeing that he could enter into the marriage without assuming Mary had been unfaithful.

Matt. 1:21 she will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

Note on variant readings: Two manuscripts have to you after give birth. Instead of His people one Syriac manuscript reads the world.

For she will give birth to a son, The virgin will give birth while still remaining a virgin.

and you The "you" is singular referring to Joseph. It is not the plural form of "you" which would indicate Joseph and Mary. Old English had "thou" and "ye" to distinguish between singular and plural while modern English has only "you."

will name him Jesus. It was important for Joseph to name His Son, “Jesus.” By doing so he would acknowledge the child as his own son. Therefore Jesus would be the “Son of David.”

Male children were formally named at the time of circumcision—on the eighth day after birth (Luke 2:21). The language “You will call His name” reminds us of similar revelations in the Old Testament (Genesis 16:11; Isaiah 7:14). Divinely revealed names are full of meaning. The style is an echo of the Old Testament story in Genesis 17:19 (LXX) where the birth of Isaac is recorded. Hence the birth of Jesus and Isaac are compared in their supernatural character.

The use of the word “name” in this sentence is a figure of speech called a pleonasm or a redundancy. It refers to the use of more words than the grammar requires—that is, the sentence would be complete without the use of this word or group of words. Although the use may appear to be redundant, it certainly is not. They are not useless words but rather are necessary to complete the sense.

We find the word “name” seemingly redundant in the phrase “the name of God” which means God Himself. The use of name places greater emphasis than if the simple word God was used. Therefore when we have the phrase “to call upon the name of the Lord” it refers to calling upon the Lord Himself since this expression, by the figure of pleonasm, refers to His character. Thus when Scripture refers to the name of the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit, it refers to their person rather than their personal name.

Consequently in the phrase “His name Jesus” it refers to more than just His personal name, it means “that holy one Himself.” For another example of this figure of speech see 6:9 “hallowed by Your name”—that is “Let Your Yourself alone be worshipped.”

For he himself The “He” is emphatic in the Greek. Jesus Himself, and no other, will bring about this redemption (Luke 1:68; 24:21).

will save Salvation from sins was part of the hope of the Old Testament (Psalm 130:8 LXX; Isaiah 53; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-31). However, it was not the dominant hope of the Jews living at the time of Jesus. The mention of it here would warn them not to expect the popular notion that the Messiah would be a national liberator.

In the late 1st century before Christ the work Ps. Sol. 17 expressed the Jewish expectation of a Davidic Messiah who would deliver His people and purify them for judgment. However the idea of saving them from their sins is missing.

There is a play on words here between the Hebrew words to save (yoshea) and Jesus (yeshua). This may imply there was a Hebrew original behind this verse. The play on words does not work in Aramaic or Greek.

his people This refers to the people of God—the Jews as opposed to the Gentiles.

from their sins He had come to save them from their sins, not to free them from Rome. This was different than the popular expectation of that day. This salvation will be accomplished by the shedding of Jesus' blood (26:28) and will forgive each individual of sin who trusts in Jesus.

Matt. 1:22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (along with the Syriac Versions) read Isaiah after the word prophet.

But all this took place, The coming of Jesus was not only a new creation by the Holy Spirit, it was also the last stage in a long-awaited process in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. This is the first of Matthew's formula quotations. Verses 22,23 should probably be understood as the comment of Matthew rather than the continuation of the words spoken by the angel.

that what was spoken by the Lord The ultimate source was the Lord.

through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, The prophet was the intermediate source between the Lord and His people. In one half of Matthew's fulfillment quotations the prophet is not named.

Matt. 1:23 "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and he will be called Immanuel (meaning, God is with us)"

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts read you will call (singular) instead of they will call.

"Behold the virgin will conceive, Isaiah 7:14 is the source of the quotation. Luke 1:31 probably also alludes to this verse indicating that both he and Matthew saw its relevance in the birth of Christ. By the middle of the second century (see the writing of the church father Justin) Isaiah 7:14 was an important Christian weapon in defense of the virgin birth of Jesus.

and give birth to a son, Not a daughter.

and they will call That is—people looking back on this event.

his name Immanuel," This is not a personal name. In Isaiah 7:14 it is seen as fulfilled, not in the naming of Jesus, but in the whole account of His origin and naming. It is not that Jesus ever bore the name Immanuel but that it indicates His role, bringing God's presence to man.

which translated means, Matthew now explains to his readers what this phrase means. It is actually a transliteration of the Hebrew into Greek—making a new Greek word from the sound of the Hebrew phrase "God is with us."

“God is with us.” This is a statement, not a prayer. The meaning is explained to Matthew’s readers. Matthew’s use of this term may be understood in one of two ways.

1. “God is with us” describes the nature of Jesus. He is God who has become a human.

2. Matthew wanted to show that the virgin conception was not something new, but that it had been predicted by the prophet Isaiah. God is now with the people to save them as the prophets have predicted. Therefore “God is with us” would not so much describe the exact nature of Jesus, but rather that God has been gracious to His people by sending His Messiah.

Matt. 1:24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife

when Joseph rose up from the sleep, The divine dream is now over.

he did as the angel of the Lord ordered him, Throughout the first two chapters of Matthew, the divine initiative is first described and then followed by human obedience.

and took her as his wife. The marriage was formally completed but not consummated until after the birth of Jesus. In Matthew’s explanation of Jesus’ birth and infancy, God’s initiative is given first, and then it is followed by human action and obedience. “The sole purpose of the hastened marriage being to legitimize the child” (Bruce, p. 69).

Matt. 1:25 but did not know her intimately until she gave birth to a son. And he named Him Jesus.

Note on variant readings: The phrase And he did not know her until is not found in two manuscripts. After birth one Syriac manuscript reads to him. Many manuscripts (the reading of TR and MT) have the phrase her firstborn son instead of a son (this same phrase is used of Jesus in Luke 2:7).

And he did not know her This reemphasizes the fact of the miracle of the virgin conception. Joseph did not have sexual relations with Mary until after Jesus was born.

until she gave birth to a Son. The Greek expression “did not know her until” suggests that they enjoyed a normal marriage relationship after Jesus’ birth and that Jesus brothers (12:46) were subsequently born of Joseph and Mary in a normal way.

It must also be noted, that in the New Testament, whenever we find this Greek word *heos* (translated “until”) preceded by a word that negates it, it always implies the negated action did, or will take place after the point of time indicated. Consequently we should assume that Joseph and Mary did have a normal marriage relationship after the birth of Jesus. Harold Fowler observes:

The perpetual virginity of Mary, asserted by many, creates some not indifferent biblical problems, since it seems to be contradicted by clear New Testament testimonies. Such a doctrine obligates the believer to give to the “until” of Matthew a defining sense that is never found elsewhere in Holy Scripture, introducing into it an exception without any sure foundation (Fowler, Volume 1, p. 210).

A.B. Bruce adds:

Subsequent intercourse was the natural, if not the necessary, course of things. If the evangelist had felt as the Catholics do, he would have taken pains to prevent misunderstanding (Bruce, p. 69).

Furthermore, the verb in the imperfect tense (continuous action in past time) also suggests a normal marriage relationship after the birth of Jesus. There is no biblical warrant for the idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary as David Hill notes:

As the text stands, however, the words reiterate the miracle (which was Matthew’s concern here) and do not lend support to the idea of the subsequent virginity of Mary, although they do not absolutely deny it. It must be admitted that if the notion of Mary’s perpetual virginity had been familiar to the evangelist or to the milieu for which he wrote, he would surely have been more explicit (Hill, p. 80).

And he named him Jesus. Joseph named Him Jesus in obedience to the angel. This also indicates his formal adoption of Jesus and the establishment of his Davidic lineage. Bruce notes:

“He (not she) called the child Jesus, the statement referring back to the command of the angel to Joseph . . . before the Exile the mother, after the Exile the father, gave the name to the child at circumcision (Bruce, p. 69).

Note: If the phrase “firstborn son” is original with Matthew, it does not, in and of itself, mean that there were other sons (or daughters) after Jesus that were born to Joseph and Mary. The term “firstborn” has the idea of preeminence, not Jesus was the first of later- born children. The first may be the “only” (Isaiah 44:6).

Summary To Chapter 1

Chapter one is divided into two distinct parts: verses 1-17 gives the record of Jesus’ ancestry and in verses 18-25 the angel appears to Joseph and explains the meaning of Mary’s pregnancy—Joseph will be the father of Jesus only in the legal sense.

The story of Jesus’ birth records God fulfilling what He has promised in the Old Testament—specifically to David and Abraham. In the genealogy Matthew lists three times fourteen generations. The first series of fourteen show the origin of the house of David. The second fourteen chronicles its

The Gospel According To Matthew

rise and decline. In the third list, the house of David ends with the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and David—the coming of the Messiah.

Matthew's intent is to show that Jesus is the legitimate heir to the throne of David. In listing His genealogy we find various types individuals: women and men, Gentiles as well as Jews, those who did evil and those who did good. The Messiah is the Savior of all races and all classes of people.

The section reveals the virginal conception of Jesus. Joseph and Mary were betrothed but not officially married when she was pregnant. Joseph was going to privately divorce her when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream with an explanation of the circumstances. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that impregnated Mary and that Joseph must take her home to be his wife. Furthermore Joseph must name the child Jesus since He is the one who will save His people from their sins.

Matthew then cites Isaiah 7:14 as the passage that predicts the virgin conception of Jesus. With Jesus' coming to earth He is Immanuel—God with us. God is now dwelling in the midst of His people.

Joseph rises from his sleep and immediately does as the angel commands. He takes Mary to be his wife but does not have sexual relations with her until after the Son is born—whom He names Jesus.

Matthew's account is a mixture of the miraculous with the ordinary, the divine with the human. God brought His Son into the world by means of a virginal conception. Matthew does not focus on the birth itself but on the significance it will play in fulfilling God's plan. The names of the Promised One—Jesus and Immanuel—have significance. They illustrate God has visited His people in order to save them from their sins. The history of the chosen people, which began with Abraham, has now reached its long-awaited goal. The One whom the Law and the Prophets wrote about has finally arrived—God has become human!

**Matthew
Chapter 2**

Matthew's infancy stories are different from Luke (who does not record the visit of the Magi, the flight to Egypt, and the slaughter of the innocents). Matthew stresses God's protection of the child Jesus. Chapter 2 shows that God works His will despite opposition from evil forces.

**The Visit of the Magi And
The Surprise of Herod (2:1-12)**

The chapter begins with the visit of the Magi—the mysterious wise men from a distant land who have come to worship the newborn king. By their visit, Matthew will show that Jesus is Lord of all people—both Jews and Gentiles since important men came from a distant Gentile country to worship the infant Jesus.

On the other side, it is the chosen people, the Jews, and their king Herod, who neglect Christ, while the Gentiles come to worship Him. Even the religious leaders, who knew the most, still failed to act upon what they knew (2:5). Herod and the people of Jerusalem are surprised with the visit of the Magi and the king inquires where this new king will be born.

Matt. 2:1 After Jesus had been born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem

Now after Jesus had been born Jesus had already been born when this episode occurs. How long before, we do not know.

in Bethlehem This is the first indication of a place name in Matthew. He now tells us where Jesus was born—Bethlehem, the city of David, as opposed to another Bethlehem located in the Galilee (Joshua 9:15). Bethlehem, the “house of bread,” is located five miles south of Jerusalem. The city had strong associations with King David (Luke 2:4,11) which is another indication that Jesus is the Messiah.

of Judea This indicates the southern part of the Holy Land as opposed to Samaria. Judea can also refer to the territory east of Jordan (19:1).

in the days of Herod the king Herod the Great (73 B.C. to 4 B.C.) was not a Jew— his father an Idumean and his mother Arabian. The Roman senate had made him king of Judea in 40 B.C. Although Herod was a great builder (including the enlargement of the temple) and had been occasionally generous to the Jewish people he eventually lost favor with them. His mixed lineage with his Edomite blood would have made him unacceptable to the people (see Malachi 1:4).

Herod became increasingly cruel toward the end of his reign. Thinking that his own family was about to overthrow him he murdered one of his wives (Mariamne), her mother, two of her sons, and his own eldest son. This led the Roman Emperor Augustus to comment that it would be safer to be Herod's pig (*hus* in Greek) than his son (*huios*).

Our system of dating, B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (the Latin *Anno Domini*—in the year of our Lord), was worked out by a monk named Dionysius Exiguus at the beginning of the sixth century. This change in the calendar moved the western world away from the previous dating—according to the founding of Rome.

Herod was a tyrant but he earned the title of “the Great” by being a great builder. He rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem (20 B.C.), rebuilt Samaria (which he renamed Sebaste in honor of the emperor) and other significant works. The title “king” here and in verse three stands in contrast to the Magi’s reference to the king of the Jews.

behold, Magi The word Magi has four general meanings. They are:

- (1) Members of the Persian priestly class
- (2) Possessors of supernatural knowledge and power
- (3) A magician
- (4) A deceiver or seducer

Here the word probably denotes astrologers, men who gained special insight into world affairs from their observation of the planets and stars (hence the common translation “wise men”) These men were students of the stars.

The emphasis in Matthew, however, is on the fact that they were Gentiles. To the Jews the Gentiles were to be foreign to God’s plan and purposes. In his gospel, Matthew will repeatedly call attention to the Gentiles responding where the Jews do not (8:11; 21:43). Though the Magi were not Jews, their knowledge about the king of the Jews was derived from some prior Jewish contact. It is only later Christian tradition that designates them as kings. Tradition also lists their number as three, and even assigns them names and personal characteristics.

The word “magi” is also used in Acts 13:6,8 of the magician Elymas (Bar-Jesus). In this case it is used in the sense of one who practices the magical arts. Our English word “magic” is derived from magi.

arrived from the East They came from the direction of the East, therefore they were moving West. Their exact location is left unstated. Three possibilities are usually given:

- (1) Parthia (Modern day Iran)
- (2) Babylon
- (3) Arabia

Babylon had a settled Jewish community and seems the most likely candidate (cf. Daniel 2:48; 5:11). It is also the place where the prophet Daniel had lived and recorded his many Messianic prophecies and visions (see especially chapter 9).

The Magi are unfamiliar the Micah passage in gives the birth place of the Messiah. This Scripture was cited by the High Priest and scribes. The Magi make the natural assumption that the new king was to be born in the capital city, not in some small village.

Later tradition pictured these wise men as kings, three in number matching the three different gifts they brought. The Armenian Infancy Gospel (late 6th century A.D.) gives them names: Gaspar, Balthasar, and Melchior.

The visit of the Magi is commemorated in the celebration called Epiphany (January 6). This is also referred to as the Twelfth Day of Christmas.

into Jerusalem. Therefore they went to Jerusalem. They do not go to Herod, but are only summoned to do so (vs. 7) after he hears of their purpose (vs. 3). The fact that they come to Jerusalem rather than Bethlehem suggests the traditional idea of the star leading them is inaccurate.

Matt. 2:2 saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him

saying, “Where is he? This sentence is the only recorded utterance of the Magi. This is the first question recorded in the New Testament. Compare this to first question God asked Adam in the Garden of Eden, “Where are you?”

When Adam sinned he attempted to hide from God, but God came after the straying sinner and asked him his whereabouts. Now the answer to the sin problem, that brought about by Adam, is found in the One whom the Magi ask His whereabouts, “Where is He?”

who has been born king of the Jews? Jesus is the true king of the Jews. He is not “born to be king” but He is the newborn king. We find phrase “king of the Jews” again in the passion narrative when Jesus is ridiculed (27:11,29,37). In Matthew the phrase is *always* in the mouth of Gentiles.

The title of king has political overtones because of the Jewish expectation of a political Messiah. This, however, will go against the angel’s explanation of Jesus’ coming (1:21) and Jesus’ own understanding of His mission.

Here it has obvious Messianic significance. Herod will rephrase the question, “Where is the Christ to be born?” The scriptural answer is then given.

For we observed his star The ancients believed that comets and falling stars were omens of the fall of rulers. There are cases where some Roman

emperors were banished because of the predictions by the astrologers. By this time, many Jews accepted this idea that the stars could accurately predict the future. Though these Magi were pagans, God used this method of revealing Himself in this one specific instance though the Scriptures clearly forbade any type of predicting from the stars (Deuteronomy 18:11; Isaiah 2:6; 47:11-15). True prophecy is described in Deuteronomy 18:15.

The star refers to some unknown astronomical phenomena that linked this star with the king of the Jews. The Magi do not explain the link. The star could have been some natural phenomena. Suggestions along this line include:

- (1) The conjunction of planets (Jupiter and Saturn came into line in 7-6 B.C. in the constellation of Pisces).
- (2) A comet (Halley's passed in 12-11 B.C)
- (3) A supernova (exploding star).
- (4) The movement and standing still of Jupiter.

There is, of course, always the possibility, that the star was a strictly supernatural phenomenon and that people look in vain for some natural explanation.

Whatever the case may be, the Magi understood it as a sign of the fulfillment of the promise of a coming Jewish king. Hence, they set off for Jerusalem. Jesus is referred to elsewhere in the New Testament as "the rising star" (Luke 1:78; 2 Peter 1:19; Revelation 22:16). Compare 4:16.

Matthew may have had in mind the story of Balaam's prophecy of the rising star out of Jacob (Numbers 24:17) which was understood to refer to the coming Deliverer.

at its rising, This is not the direction (East). This is the unique astronomical feature that convinced them something special had happened.

and we have come to worship him." In the New Testament the word translated worship can be an act of reverence to a great man (18:26) or worship of God (4:10). From Magi's perspective it was probably an act of homage to a great king. Matthew's readers, however, know the real meaning better than the Magi themselves. Worship, in the proper sense, is restricted to God alone. Jesus is the manifestation of God's presence (1:23), He is the Son of God (2:15) and thus He is to be worshipped. Worship of Christ is an important theme in Matthew (used 10 times).

Matt. 2:3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him;

Note on a variant reading: One manuscript does not have *all*.

When King Herod heard this The repetition of the word “king” highlights the problem. Another king? The non-Jew Herod had been made king by the Romans and now the genuine king of the Jews may have arrived.

he was troubled King Herod’s later years were plagued by fear of rivals and the idea of a new king being born would have upset him greatly. Furthermore, at that time, there was a widespread expectation that a universal king would appear and bring about an age characterized by peace and prosperity.

and all of Jerusalem with him. The city here is personified as it often is in the Old Testament. It is unknown why the whole city was also troubled. It is possibly because of Herod’s reaction or they may have expected trouble immediately before the reign of the Messiah. Whatever the public excitement around the arrival of the Magi and their question about the newborn king, it leads to nothing for we read of it no further in the narrative.

This may refer to the Jewish leaders who would later reject Jesus, persecute Him and eventually hand Him over to the Romans for crucifixion. If this is what is in mind, then this phrase could anticipate the eventual rejection of Jesus by the nation (cf. 23:37-39). Later, Matthew will tell us that the whole city was again “shaken” by Jesus—because of His so-called triumphal entry (21:10).

Matt. 2:4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts do not have the phrase *from them*.

And after gathering together It is unlikely the term for gathering together is a reference to the Jewish synagogue. There is nothing sinister here, as some people have tried to argue.

all the chief priests The term is used for more than just the one high priest. It can have reference to the captain of temple, the leader of weekly priests, the past high priests, or the family of ruling high priest. We learn from Josephus there were 28 High Priests from the time of Herod until the fall of Jerusalem. They were appointed by either the Romans or the Herodian princes. Herod himself appointed seven. These High Priests were chosen, for the most part, from a few aristocratic families—the Sadducees. According to the usual chronology of the life of Jesus, the High Priest at His birth was either Matthias son of Theophilus or Joasar son of Boethos (Josephus, *Antiquities*, XVII, iv. 2, vi. 4).

and scribes of the people The scribes could be learned scholars of the law—they were experts in the law of Moses. Herod assembled these experts with whom he was on bad terms. The fact that Matthew speaks of Herod assembling the Sanhedrin has caused some to doubt the truthfulness of this passage as McNeile notes:

The summoning of the whole Sanhedrin for this purpose is open to grave doubt. Not only is Herod said to have begun his reign with a massacre of its members (Jos. Ant. XIV. ix. 4), —he certainly reduced its importance and influence to a minimum—but he could have easily asked the question privately of a single Scribe. The narrative emphasizes the zeal of the foreigners who sought the Messiah, in contrast with the indifference of the official rulers (McNeile, p. 15).

he began to inquire from them. Herod was inquiring, or continued to inquire (the imperfect tense in Greek refers to continuous action in past time).

where the Christ is to be born. Not the king but where the Messiah is to be born. The verb is in the present tense in Greek with the emphasis on the certainty of the event.

Matt. 2:5 “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written.

Note on a variant reading. Some manuscripts have the word *Micah* after the word prophet. One Latin manuscript reads *through Isaiah the prophet saying*.

And they said to him, “In Bethlehem Notice they do not consult the stars, but rather the Scriptures when they want to find where He will be born. They knew the predicted place for the Messiah’s birth, so their failure to believe was not due to ignorance. John 7:41,42 shows that even the common people knew where the Messiah was to be born. However, though Israel knew where the Messiah would be born, the Gentiles are first to worship Him. Apparently they did nothing about the report for even with the visit of these foreign dignitaries they did not bother to travel the six miles to check it out!

of Judea This is contrasted to the Bethlehem in the Galilee area.

for thus it is written by the prophet: This Scripture is found in Micah 5:2.

Matt. 2:6 ‘O Bethlehem of Judah, you are not just a lowly village in Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel’ ”

Note on a variant reading. Some manuscripts read *of Judea* instead of *land of Judah*. A few manuscripts read *land of the Jews*.

And you Bethlehem, They quote Scripture for the answer—Micah 5:2 with last line from 2 Samuel 5:2. Matthew’s quote is not particularly close to Hebrew or the Septuagint but has the basic sense of the passage. Thus the differences between them are minor.

in the land of Judah, Again to make the distinction between the other Bethlehem located in the Galilee.

you are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; This word is inserted by Matthew to show Bethlehem's greatness. It is not part of the prophecy from Micah or 2 Samuel.

for out of you No other city had this promise. This one city was singled out from all the cities on earth.

will come a ruler The Messiah would come out of Bethlehem.

who will shepherd " The leader is not specified as the Messiah but as the one who will shepherd Israel.

my people Israel.' Jesus, the Son of David, was born in the city of David, and like David, He will ruler over God's people.

Though the religious rulers knew where the Messiah was to be born they acted neither positively (as did the Magi 2:11) or negatively (as did Herod 2:16). They did absolutely nothing at all! Their later successors, who could not ignore Him, were the ones who plotted Jesus' execution (26:3-4,57).

Matt. 2:7 Then Herod sent a private message to the wise men, asking them to come see him. At this meeting he learned the exact time when they first saw the star.

Then Herod, after he had secretly summoned the Magi Herod summons them privately, he wants no undue publicity, and finds out the exact date when the star made its appearance.

found out from them the time the star appeared. He gives no reason why he asked, but obviously it is to determine the age of the young child.

Matt. 2:8 Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"

And he sent them to Bethlehem Herod dispatches them to Bethlehem—the place where the Scripture says the Messiah will be born.

and said, "Go and search carefully for the child; The question arises as to why Herod did not send troops. Most likely, he had no doubt the Magi would return and tell him the exact location of the child. Furthermore, the sight of soldiers coming with them would have jeopardized their chances of finding the child.

and as soon as you find him, report to me, He wants to know the exact location and identity of this new king if indeed He does exist.

so that I too may come and worship him." The Magi have no way of knowing that Herod is lying about his intent.

Matt. 2:9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

Note on a Variant Reading: Instead of *the place where the child was* two manuscripts read *of the child*.

And after they heard the king, they went away; The Magi, not knowing the real intentions of Herod, go their way to find the Christ child in accordance with the kings' wishes. We note the irony of the situation—the Jewish religious leaders made no attempt to follow through on the possibility that this child might be the long-awaited Messiah. The first to understand were Gentiles who came from a far away land.

Even at this early stage of Matthew's gospel we see the universal implications of Jesus' coming to the earth. He will be the Savior of the entire world.

and behold the star which they saw at its rising The astronomical phenomena they saw in their own country again appeared to them.

was going before them The fact that it was going before them" (imperfect tense in Greek which indicates continuous action in past time) denotes something supernatural. No natural phenomena could explain this.

The text may be implying that the star only appeared to move due to the movement of the Magi. Since Bethlehem was only a few miles from Jerusalem any distance the star moved would have been unnoticeable unless it was only about a mile high. The point is that the movement was supernatural.

until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. Again, there is no way to explain this on a natural level. The idea that the star would lead them to the very house where Jesus was living was no problem for the ancients—a star was said to lead Aeneas to the spot where Rome was founded (Virgil, Aeneid 2.694ff.).

The idea of a supernatural sign leading the Magi would have the Matthew's readers recalling how the Israelites were led in the Exodus by the cloud and the fire (Exodus 13:21-22).

Justin Martyr said Jesus was born in a cave that served as a stall for cattle and donkeys. It would have been beneath the inn on the side of a hill (Mounce, p. 20).

Matt. 2:10 And when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

And when they saw the star, The star now reappears.

they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. They were exceedingly happy that their long journey was over.

Matt. 2:11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

Note on a Variant Reading: Instead of *they saw* a few manuscripts read *they found*.

And when they came unto the house, They are now in a house, not in the manger. Matthew tells us nothing about the manger story or that the previous residence of Joseph and Mary was in Nazareth (Luke 1:26).

they saw the child The child is mentioned first, before His mother. The Greek word translated “child” can refer to an infant. Jesus was not necessarily an older child at this time. The same term used in Luke 2:27 of Jesus forty days after His birth.

with Mary his mother, There is silence concerning Joseph. Matthew emphasizes Mary’s special importance (see 1:16)

and falling down they worshipped him. Though not specifically alluded to by Matthew, Psalm 72:10-11 refers to kings falling down before “the king.” His readers, familiar with the Old Testament, would probably have thought of this passage in the Psalms.

And then they opened their gifts These are gifts fit for a king. All nations will serve the king and offer Him gifts.

of gold, Gold is mentioned in Psalm 72:15.

and of incense, Isaiah 60:1-6 speaks of the nations and kings offering gold and incense.

and of myrrh. Myrrh is also a gift fit for a king (Psalm 45:8; Song of Songs 3:6), and they remind the reader of the homage paid to David’s son Solomon by the Queen of Sheba with her gifts of spices and gold. The use of myrrh in Jesus’ crucifixion (Mark 15:23) and burial (John 19:39) led to the tradition that it symbolizes His suffering. However, in the Old Testament, it is rather a symbol of joy and festivity (see references above and Proverbs 7:17; Song of Songs 5:5).

The decoding of the gifts, i.e. gold and incense means Deity, and myrrh is equal to suffering, is not relevant to Matthew’s intention though it remains a popular way of viewing the gifts brought by the Magi.

Matt. 2:12 And having been warned *by God* in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their own country by another way.

Then, being divinely instructed This is a common term used of divine revelations, injunctions, and warnings.

in a dream not to return to Herod, Matthew stresses the continuing control of God's providence. Revelation by dreams was a regular feature in the culture to which these Magi belonged. God's use of their astrological and cultural background does *not* imply His endorsement of their practices. The star initially did not lead them, the star only got their attention as to the fact that the Messiah had been born.

they departed through another way into their own country. They went back to their unknown country through an unknown way. The key thought is that they bypassed Jerusalem. Mounce makes the following interesting observation:

By secular observation these gentile astrologers had discerned the coming of the Jewish Messiah, sought him out in order to worship him, and now in obedience to a divine visitation return home without making contact with the religious authorities. All this time the religious leaders of Jerusalem know from their own Scriptures where the Messiah is to be born. But not even the visit of foreign dignitaries piques their curiosity enough to find out if there is any truth in the report. As Jesus later said, "I have come into the world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind" (John 9:39) (Mounce, p. 16).

The story of the Magi shows that Gentiles, unlike the Jews, were receptive to the Jewish king. This speaks of the future blessing for all nations, not just Israel which is in keeping with God's promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3).

The church in the West did not miss the importance of the Magi's visit. Before they began to celebrate Christmas, they already celebrated Epiphany (January 6) which celebrates the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

This introduces a theme that will occur throughout the Gospel—the presence of the Messianic king demands decision and therefore causes division between the ones who reject and accept Him. We note, for example, the opposite reactions of Herod and the Magi. Furthermore this passage stresses the link with David by showing His birth to be in David's city Bethlehem in fulfillment of prophecy though His home will be in Nazareth (explained in the next passage).

A. H. McNeile writes the following.

The narrative of the Magians is rich in spiritual significance. It affords a type of early history of Christianity: the Son of God was revealed 'to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile'—to the mother and Joseph first, and also to the foreign astrologers. This, as Zahn says, is heard throughout the gospel, 7:10-12; 12:18-21; 15:24-28, 24:14, 28:19. He was revealed to the humble and ignorant first, and then to the honorable and learned; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:26. To the poor first, and then to the rich; to the West first, and then to the East. It also has other lessons: He was revealed to

astrologers by a method suited to their habits and understanding. And their object in coming to Jesus was not personal advantage, but solely to give Him homage (McNeile, p. 22).

The Flight to Egypt (2:13-15)

After the Magi depart Joseph is warned in a dream to take his family and leave Bethlehem for Egypt. They will remain there until the death of Herod.

Matt. 2:13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him”

Note on a variant reading: One manuscript (Vaticanus) has *into their country* after *departed*.

Now when they had departed, With the Magi now gone, God will providentially intervene with Joseph.

behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, Joseph is again warned in a dream. This is a recurring theme in the first two chapters. In the ancient world dreams were viewed as a form of communication with the unseen realm. Ancient cultures had professionals who would interpret dreams (see Daniel 2:2). However from the biblical perspective this ability came from God alone (Genesis 40:8).

saying, “Get up and take the child and his mother, The child and his mother is a stock phrase.

and flee into Egypt, This was out of the jurisdiction of Herod. Egypt, particularly since the days of the Maccabees was a place of asylum for Jews.

and stay there until I tell you; They would be divinely instructed when to return.

for Herod is about to search for the child There is immediate danger.

to destroy him.” The threat is consistent with what we know of Herod’s character. This same verb, translated “destroy,” also occurs in the passion narrative 27:20 where the chief priests and elders are the ones who want to destroy Jesus. This also reminds us of Pharaoh’s attempt on the life of Moses (Exodus 2:15).

Matt. 2:14 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt.

And he arose, took the child and his mother As always, Joseph’s obedience is immediate. Note the order in which they are listed; even in His infancy Jesus is given priority over everyone else.

by night, This stresses the immediacy of the need. The fact that they left by night would have made their escape impossible to trace. Leaving at night would also evoke memories of the night Exodus (Exodus 12:31).

and left The Greek word *anachoreo* has the idea to “withdraw from danger” (see 2:22; 12:15). *Anchorite* later became a technical term for the monks who withdrew from society.

for Egypt. At this time every large city in Egypt had a group of Jews living there.

Matt. 2:15 and was there until the death of Herod, that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, “Out of Egypt did I call My Son.”

Note on a variant reading: One Syriac manuscript reads *through the mouth of Isaiah the prophet* instead of *the prophet*.

And he remained there He refers to Jesus.

until the death of Herod, This would have occurred some years later. “Herod died shortly before Passover, in March-April 4 B.C. According to apocryphal tradition, the sojourn in Egypt lasted seven years” (Hill, p. 85). It is possible that Jesus could have been born as early as 7 B.C. The fact that Herod ordered the slaughter of all the children two years and under lends possibility to that date.

that it might be fulfilled This is the third of Matthew’s fulfillment quotations.

that which was spoken by the Lord The ultimate source.

through the prophet, The prophet is the intermediate source.

saying, “Out of Egypt I called my son.” The reference is Hosea 11:1. This fulfillment quotation belongs properly after verse 21, after the account of Herod’s death and Joseph’s return to Egypt. Putting it here places the Exodus to Egypt example prior to the Exile (vs. 16-18). By doing this, it unites the holy family’s experience in Egypt with the Exodus.

Hosea is referring to the actual Exodus and not making a prophecy about the future. Therefore the fulfillment would be typical of two great moments of redemptive history: (1) the Exodus of the nation from Egypt and (2) the Exodus of the Holy family from Egypt. Matthew connects them to form a larger unity.

The earlier is a foreshadow of the latter. Israel, and God’s Son Jesus are both in Egypt of necessity and are both delivered by divine provision. Matthew sees Jesus living out and summing up the history of Israel.

In Egypt, in the Exodus, and in the wilderness, Jesus is the embodiment of Israel. He not only anticipates her victories but He also shares in her

sufferings (cf. Isaiah 63:8,9). Israel's history has now reached its goal, the earlier Exodus finds its counterpart and its climax in the deliverance of God's people from their sins (1:21).

It should also be noted that the place where the Lord was crucified (Jerusalem) was spiritually called Egypt (Revelation 11:8).

The Slaughter of the Innocents (2:16-18)

The murderous king Herod, seeing that the Magi tricked him, now orders the slaughter of the innocent male children in the area of Bethlehem.

Matt. 2:16 Then Herod, when he saw that he had been outwitted by the wise men, flew into a rage. He gave orders to massacre all the male children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, in keeping with the time he had learned from the wise men.

Then Herod, after seeing that he had been tricked by the Magi, After some time had elapsed, Herod realized that the Magi were not returning.

became exceedingly angry, Herod's anger is not solely based on the Magi's failure to return. His evil intent began the first time he heard of the rival king being born. Obviously this anger intensified when they did not return.

and then he sent out Notice Matthew places the responsibility for these murders directly on Herod.

and killed all the male children in Bethlehem Since he was unable to determine whether the child actually exists and, if so, where he might be found, Herod takes no chances. He sends his troops to kill every male infant.

This act parallels Pharaoh's attempt to destroy Israel's savior—Moses (Exodus 1:15-2:10).

and in all their regions, Herod gives himself an extra measure of assurance.

from age two and beneath, The total dead would be about 20 male children, given a population of about 1,000 at that time along with the infant mortality rate.

The early church tended to exaggerate the number (Byzantine tradition set it at 14,000, Syrian at 64,000 and some even equated it with the 144,000 of Revelation 14).

Herod's ruthlessness knew no bounds when it came to protecting his throne. He had already executed his own wife Mariamne and his own sons Alexander and Aristobulus in 6 or 7 B.C.

Thereafter he executed his son Antipater (Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.11.7; 17.7) as well as a large group of conspirators.

So there would be widespread mourning at his death, Herod ordered that a member of every family was to be killed when he died (Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.6.6.). Fortunately, this order was never carried out.

according to the time he had ascertained from the Magi. Two years was probably more than sufficient time, allowing for the time the Magi originally had seen the star. The Magi may have observed it long before they arrived in Jerusalem.

Mounce comments upon the lack of historical corroboration to the slaughter of the innocents.

That Herod would certainly carry out such a savage plan is not surprising. We already know that he murdered members of his own family, and, after all, Bethlehem was a tiny little village with not more than twenty or thirty children of that age. That Josephus the historian (or any other early writer) neglects to mention the slaughter tells us more about the cruelty of that day than it does about any lack of historicity of the event. Such purges were simply not noteworthy (Mounce, p. 18).

Matt. 2:17 Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled.

Note on a variant reading: Two manuscripts have *by the Lord* after *spoken*.

Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying, Herod's wrong action is seen as fulfilling prophecy. The quotation is introduced with a fulfillment statement with one part obviously missing, "in order that.

All other formula quotations of Matthew have this word ("in order that") which expresses the purpose. The only other exception is 27:9-10 where it also refers to something evil. Matthew therefore is reluctant to ascribe evil to the purposes of God.

Matt. 2:18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

Note on a variant reading. Many manuscripts have *lamentation* before *weeping and great mourning*.

A voice was heard in Ramah, Ramah has no importance as a place name. The tomb of Rachel is in Ramah (cf. 1 Samuel 10:2) which is about six miles north of Jerusalem. It is on the road the exiles would have taken.

weeping and great mourning. The quotation is from Jeremiah 31:15. Its connection is to the Exile of the people to either Assyria (the ten northern tribes—Israel) or to Babylon (the two southern tribes—Judah).

There is also another tradition, possibly current in Matthew's day, that Rachel's tomb was on the outskirts of Bethlehem (see Genesis 35:10;48:7 which says she was buried on the way to Bethlehem). However, the exact site of Ramah (1 Samuel 10:2) is in the area of Benjamin. This Bethlehem tradition is current to this day.

If Matthew had this also in mind, then Rachel was weeping for the slain infants in Bethlehem in the larger context of joy because the Messiah has been born in the same small town.

Rachel weeping for her children Rachel weeps bitterly because of the fate of the exiles. Yet the larger context in Jeremiah is one of hope, deliverance, and fulfillment (Jeremiah 30-31). References to Messianic joy surround this weeping and mourning. Similarly Matthew's story of Messianic joy is marred by the death of the innocent children in Bethlehem. Hence the parallel.

and not willing to be comforted, No one could console her at the loss of these infants.

because they are no more." As there was deliverance from the Exile patterned after deliverance from Egypt in the Exodus, so God now brings Messianic deliverance. The weeping mothers of Bethlehem and Rachel's weeping for the exiles corresponds to the larger context in each story that the Messiah will deliver His people. Again we have Jesus summing up the whole experience of Israel. Note further the geographical significance of the first three quotations of Matthew. They involve the city of David (Bethlehem), the land of the Exodus (Egypt), and the mourning of the exiles to Babylon.

Note also that Matthew also highlights the differences between two kings, the pretender and the rightful one. Herod was selfish while Jesus was self-denying and self-sacrificing (16:24; 20:28); Herod yielded to Satan while Jesus resisted Satan's temptations (4:1-11). Herod was the destroyer while Christ was the Savior (1:21). Herod was cruel to the little ones while Christ was kind to the little ones (15:32; 19:14). Finally, Herod lost everything while Christ was given control over everything (11:27; 28:18).

The Return of the Holy Family, The Settling in Nazareth (2:19-23)

After Herod's death the family returns to Israel. However because Herod's son is ruling Judea in his father's place Joseph takes the family and settles in Nazareth.

Matt. 2:19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying.

But after the death of Herod, Approximately 4 B.C. but of the exact time we are not certain. It could have been closer to 1 B.C.

behold, the angel of the Lord Again the angel of the Lord appears.

appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, His death signified not only the return of the Holy Family but also of others who had fled from his tyranny. We find similar language is used to refer to the death of Pharaoh (Exodus 2:23).

Matt. 2:20 saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.”

saying, “Arise and take the child and his mother, Joseph is commanded to take Mary and Jesus back to Israel.

and go to the land of Israel; From Egypt back to Israel just like the Exodus.

for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” This statement is almost verbatim with Exodus 4:19 and may account for the plural “those.” It is also possible that the plural refers to Herod’s servants, who after Herod’s death, were no longer in power. A third possibility is that sometimes the Greek language uses a categorical plural—a plural subject is employed to draw focus away from the subject (Herod) and onto the action. Thus the point emphasized is that the child’s life is no longer in danger.

Matt. 2:21 Joseph got up and left with them for Israel.

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *came* instead of *entered into*.

And he rose up and took the child and his mother, Joseph again immediately obeys.

and entered into the land of Israel. They go back to the land they started from.

Matt. 2:22 But when he heard that Herod’s son Archelaus was now ruler of Judea, he was afraid to go there. Then in a dream he was told to go to Galilee.

But when he heard that Archelaus When Herod died Archelaus, his eldest son, was placed over Judea, Samaria, and Idumea.

was ruling in Judea His rule, however, did not extend to the Galilee.

in place of his father Herod, These kings were succeeded by their own relatives.

he became afraid to return there. The fear of Archelaus was justified. However confirmation of his kingship was withheld by Augustus until Archelaus proved himself. The confirmation never occurred because Archelaus began his reign by slaughtering 3000 prominent citizens. He was removed by the emperor two years later. Though another son of Herod ruled over the Galilee (Herod Antipas) he was a more tolerant ruler. Galilee

became known in his day as a place for revolutionary sentiments. This is something his father never would have tolerated.

And having been warned in a dream The recurring theme of the dreams continue.

he withdrew into the region of the Galilee. Matthew again stresses God's providential protection. The geographical sequence is Israel-Galilee-Nazareth. It is in Galilee where Jesus will begin His ministry (4:12-16) in fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1 which Matthew cites. Galilee's large population of Gentiles symbolizes the universal significance of the ministry of Jesus—a theme which will recur throughout the gospel.

Matt. 2:23 he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: "He shall be called a Nazarene"

Note on a variant reading: *Nazareth* is spelled differently in some manuscripts.

and he came and lived in the city called Nazareth, The family now settles in Nazareth. Matthew has already accounted for Galilee as the place where Jesus' ministry began. He is now going to account for Nazareth as the place where He lived.

Nazareth is never mentioned in Scripture apart from the gospels. It was located in the hills in Galilee and looked down upon two of the most important caravan routes in the ancient world—one from the seacoast to the territories to the east and the other from Egypt to Damascus. However Nazareth was looked down upon by those from Judea as is seen by the response of Nathaniel to his brother Philip, "Nazareth! Can any good thing come out from there? (John 1:46).

Jesus was called a "Nazarene" and Acts 24:5 says the followers of Jesus were of the "sect of the Nazarenes." This title associated Jesus with His hometown in Nazareth. Nazareth was an insignificant village with a large Gentile population. Its existence is not mentioned in the Old Testament and the idea that the Messiah would come from Nazareth would be unexpected (cf. John 1:46; 7:41,42,52). The Old Testament had already anticipated this humility of the Messiah (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 11:4-14).

that it might be fulfilled Another fulfillment quotation.

which was spoken through the prophets, We note that there is not one specific prophet mentioned. Furthermore, the word "prophets" is plural.

"He will be called a Nazarene." This statement is not found in the Old Testament and has led to much speculation as to what Matthew meant (see question at end of chapter).

The fact that Luke mentions that Mary and Joseph originally came from Nazareth is seen as a contradiction by many commentators. Matthew seems to know nothing of this fact. Matthew, however, narrates that which is relevant to his purpose in the fulfillment quotations. There is nothing in his narrative that precludes their previous residence in Nazareth. It is possible that Mary and Joseph had decided to settle in Bethlehem—it was their ancestral home town. The events surrounding the Magi, Herod the great, the slaughter of the innocents, and Herod Antipas caused them to change their plans and move north again. The angel that appeared to Joseph confirmed the need to leave this region.

The same problem is often raised by those commenting on Luke. Luke records nothing of the flight to Egypt and return. Yet Luke 2:39 is sufficiently vague that a trip to Egypt can be placed there before the return to Galilee. The verse reads:

And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.

This certainly does not preclude the events that led them to Egypt.

Summary To Chapter 2

The first section of chapter two (verses 1-12) chronicles the story of the Magi who arrive from the East. We do not know how many of them there were, exactly where they came from, how they were dressed, what their names were, and what happened to them after they went home.

They ask the question about the location of the newborn king of the Jews. Some extraordinary celestial phenomenon, which they had seen in their own country, had convinced them that the Messiah, the king of the Jews, had been born. The exact nature of this “star” is unknown. It is also not known how the Magi connected it with the birth of Christ. What is known, however, is that they came from a great distance to worship the newborn king. But first they must locate Him.

The murderous King Herod was troubled by their arrival as well as the rest of Jerusalem.

The king wants to know where this new king will be born. Consequently a meeting of the religious leaders determined that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem—as it is written in the Scriptures (Micah 5:2).

Once the king has this information he has a secret meeting with the Magi. He does not tell them his real intention but rather pretends he also wishes to worship this new king. He seeks further information from them about the time of the star’s appearance. Armed with the information, he tells them to go to Bethlehem, find the child, then return and tell him so he can join in the worship.

The Magi leave Herod and experience divine guidance that leads them to the very house where the child is staying.

The Gospel According To Matthew

They enter the house and see the child and His mother. They prostrate themselves before the newborn king in worship and then open the gifts which they brought. To what degree they understood who they were worshipping is not known. It is also unknown how much they understood the significance of the gifts they brought.

As was the situation with Joseph, God speaks to the Magi in a dream. They are instructed to return home without informing Herod concerning the whereabouts of the Messiah. They heed the warning and return home through a different route.

The lesson that Matthew is emphasizing from the visit of the Magi, is that Gentiles, as well as Jews, are part of God's plan of salvation (cf. 8:11; 28:19; Romans 10:12).

The next section is the flight into Egypt (13-15). The angel again speaks to Joseph in a dream and tells him to immediately leave the area with his family. Herod wants to take the life of the child. They immediately go by night to Egypt, which was outside of Herod's domain.

Matthew sees the flight to Egypt as a fulfillment of Hosea 11:1. The Messiah was repeating the history of the nation Israel in going down to Egypt and then returning to the Promised Land. As God supernaturally protected the nation from destruction, so too did He with the Christ child.

Once Herod realized the Magi were not returning he became furious and ordered the slaughter of the innocents (verses 16-18). All boy babies, two years and beneath were put to death upon his order. Unknown to Herod is that the one whom he was attempting to destroy had already escaped. Matthew sees this murderous act as a fulfillment of prophecy.

The last section deals with the return of the holy family and the settlement in Nazareth (verses 19-23) Joseph, again instructed in a dream, is told to return from Egypt because Herod has died. When they return they probably head for Bethlehem. However upon hearing that the cruel Archelaus is ruling Judea in the place of his father Joseph is afraid to reside there. Again he is instructed in a dream to settle in his former residence—Nazareth. This city in Galilee was out of the jurisdiction of Archelaus. Jesus would become known as a citizen of this despised city (a Nazarene) fulfilling the prophecy that the Messiah would become despised and rejected among mankind (Isaiah 11:1; 53:3; Psalm 22:6,7, 13, etc.)

The response of Herod to the baby Jesus is sharply contrasted with that of the Magi. In Herod's attempt to kill the infant King we encounter evil for the first time in Matthew's narrative. Matthew will show throughout his gospel that evil continually stands in opposition to God's kingdom which comes through Christ. This reaches a climax in the crucifixion narrative. Thus the slaughter of the innocents anticipates the eventual slaughter of the innocent Jesus on the cross.

There is, however, God's providential protection of the Holy Child. God's purposes cannot be stopped. It was not thwarted by Egyptian bondage nor by the exile of the chosen people to Babylon. In Israel's history God repeatedly brought salvation to His people. He has now brought to them the one who relives their history, sums it up, and brings it to a fulfillment. The events surrounding the Christ child are related to all that preceded. They are fulfillments of earlier events. The Messiah, the promised descendant of David toward whom all things are pointed, is now in the world. As did His people, He comes out of Egypt to the Promised Land and settles in Galilee. He brings forth light to those who sit in darkness as the prophet had foretold. He will dwell in the unlikely town of Nazareth and be called a Nazarene. As Matthew clearly shows, this is God's eternal plan, nothing has happened by accident.

Parallels We Find Between Jesus and Moses

We find some striking parallels between the two stories. The information given in parentheses is derived from Jewish sources at the time of Jesus that are testified by the writers Josephus and Philo.

1. Pharaoh killed all male Hebrew infants Exodus 1:22 (having been forewarned, either by scribes or through a dream, of a newborn Hebrew who was a threat to his kingdom and this possibility filled him and Egypt with terror).
2. At a later time Moses fled to Egypt because his life was threatened by Pharaoh Exodus 2:15 (the infant Moses deliverance is due to his parents actions).
3. At the death of Pharaoh Moses was directed to return and he obeyed, Exodus 4:1-9-20.
4. In addition to these general similarities there are some striking agreements in language. In Exodus 2:15 "he was seeking to kill Moses" is close to Matthew 2:13 "he was seeking to destroy the child." Exodus 2:15 "he fled" is identical to Matthew 2:14 In Exodus 2:23 the king of Egypt died" is close to Matthew 2:19. Most impressive of all is the nearly verbatim agreement between Exodus 4:19 and Matthew 2:20.
5. Jesus came to save His people from their sins (1:21) as Moses saved Israel from the bondage of Egypt.

Clearly Matthew had in mind the story of Moses as he tells the story of Jesus. Herod is the antitype of Pharaoh and Jesus is the antitype of Moses.

Though there is not a neat one to one correspondence between the two accounts there is rather a series of allusions that would make it clear to the Jewish reader that Jesus is the new Moses.

Did The Old Testament Predict The Messiah Would Come From Nazareth?

Did Matthew make a mistake by saying the Old Testament predicted the Messiah would come out of Nazareth? The answer is no. Matthew does not quote a particular prophet but says the prophets (plural) predicted this. He probably did this because his reference is to several Old Testament prophets though none would have his exact wording. His use of the plural is not quoting a specific utterance of one of the prophets. He is not saying this fulfills a direct statement from the Old Testament but rather it sums up the Old Testament teaching on the identity of the Messiah.

Yet Matthew probably meant more than this with his emphasis of fulfillment in Jesus growing up in Nazareth. The two main views are:

(1) Jesus Was A Nazarite

A Nazarite was one who took a special vow of separation to the Lord (Number 6:1-21; cf. Judges 13:5,7). A person abstained from cutting his hair, strong drink, and avoided contact with the dead. Although this description may fit John the Baptist (cf. Luke 1:15) it is inappropriate for Jesus who was accused of being a glutton and drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners (11:19) and who raised the dead by touching them (9:23-26).

(2) Jesus Was The Promised Messianic Branch (Hebrew *Netzer*).

Most likely we have a play on words here in Hebrew between the word for “branch” and Nazareth. The quotation in Isaiah 11:1 speaks of a branch (*netzer*) coming out of Jesse. This passage is Messianic in content and is related to Isaiah 7:14 (quoted in Matthew 1:23). The Messianic figure in Isaiah 11:1 is Emmanuel (God with us) of Isaiah 7:14.

Matthew’s readers would not realize the wordplay until they understood the meaning of *netzer* in Hebrew but the primary meaning would have been evident to the Greek reader—that Jesus was called a Nazarene since He was from Nazareth.

**Matthew
Chapter 3**

Chapter 2 ended with Jesus, Joseph, and Mary taking their residence in Nazareth. The third chapter begins some 25 to 30 years later with the arrival of John the Baptist. During these intervening years the Scripture is silent except for one incident at the temple when Jesus was twelve (Luke 2:41-50). All we know about those silent years is that Jesus was obedient to God and that He grew in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:51-52).

The Messiah Introduced. We now come to the introduction of the Messiah to the world. His first public appearance will be at His baptism. The Messiah will first be preceded by a forerunner who will prepare His way—John the Baptist.

John's title "the Baptist" can obscure what was the main thrust of his ministry—an announcement that the judgment of God was near with the coming of the Messiah. Therefore he called people to turn from their sins. They made a public acknowledgment of their confession at John's baptism.

John's preaching created a widespread revival (vs. 5) and his followers constituted a significant movement within Judaism. Interestingly, his disciples maintained a separate existence from the Christians even beyond the New Testament period (see Acts 19:1-6). His ministry is recorded by Josephus (*Antiquities* 9. 116-119) and is given more space than the ministry of Jesus. However, as the Scripture will clearly state, the significance of John lay *only* in his relationship to Jesus. Whenever John is mentioned in the gospel, it is to throw light on the mission of Jesus. As John himself said, "He must increase, I must decrease" (John 3:30).

The Ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-12)

John the Baptist arrives as the herald of Jesus. He prepares the way for the coming of the king.

Matt. 3:1 Years later, John the Baptist started preaching in the desert of Judea.

In those days This is a general indication of time contrasted to Luke's precise dating. About thirty years had lapsed between this point and the end of chapter two. Matthew passes over the vast majority of Jesus' life to get to his chief aim—His public ministry. This will include His death and resurrection.

The phrase also refers to a special time (language similar to that used by the prophets Zephaniah 1:15; Amos 9:11; Zechariah 12:3-4; Isaiah 10:20). It is a special time of revelation.

John He was apparently the first to baptize others (proselyte baptism and the baptisms at Qumran were self-administered).

the Baptist "The Baptist" was a kind of nickname.

came, This word “arrived” or “came” is same Greek word used to describe appearance of Jesus in verse 13.

preaching in the desert of Judea This is the land that drops down from the Judean hills to the Dead Sea.

Matt. 3:2 He said, “Repent! The kingdom of heaven will soon be here.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *and* before *saying*.

and saying, “Repent, Matthew alone summarizes John’s preaching in the same words as Jesus (4:17). John is not a rival of Jesus but a preacher of the same message.

Repent means more than “sorry” or “change your mind.” It has the idea of turning back to God in obedience to Him. Though repentance is not specifically linked with forgiveness of sins in this passage (as in Mark and Luke), forgiveness has already been alluded to (1:21). Matthew mentions forgiveness of sins again in 26:28 in connection with the blood of the covenant. Forgiveness of sins is presupposed in the confession of sins (v. 6)

for the Kingdom of Heaven This means the establishment of God’s rightful kingdom or the Messianic age. Matthew is the only New Testament writer to use this phrase (thirty-three times). He probably does so to avoid the unnecessary use of the word God. However, on occasion he does speak of the “kingdom of God” (12:28; 19:24; 21:31,43). There is no difference in meaning between these two terms.

John’s message is repeated by Jesus in the same words (4:17) and later by the disciples that Jesus sends out (10:7). The program of John and Jesus are the same.

has come near The kingdom has arrived with the presence of the king. Thus the time for decision has come. Matthew is the only gospel writer to mention the nearness of the kingdom.

Matt. 3:3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him’”

Note on variants readings: A couple of Syriac manuscripts do not have the *phrase A voice of one calling in the desert*. Two manuscripts do not have the phrase *be making His paths straight*.

For this is he who was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet ” Isaiah 40:3 is cited in all four gospels to describe John the Baptist. All gospels ascribe these words to Isaiah the prophet.

saying, **“A voice of one calling in the desert,** A solitary voice in the desert.

‘Prepare the way of the Lord, The coming of Jesus is the coming of the Lord. God has come down and visited His people!

be making his paths straight.’ Crooked path would be straightened when kings walked upon them.

Matt. 3:4 Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey

For John himself The word *himself* stands first in the sentence in Greek text and emphasizes that John's manner of living was in accord with the prophecy of the forerunner.

was customarily having his clothing from camel hairs, John would have reminded the people of Elijah in a number of ways.

1. His clothing would remind the people of Elijah. For a garment of hair see Zechariah 13:4.
2. His sudden appearance on the scene of history.
3. The solitary life that he led.
4. His uncompromising message.
5. The eventual clash with the king and his wife.

The relationship between John and Elijah will later be explained by Matthew (11:14; 17:12-13).

and a leather belt around his waist See 2 Kings 1:8 where the words describing Elijah are quoted almost verbatim.

and his food was locusts The locusts are still eaten to this day in the Middle East.

William Hendriksen notes, “Aversion to eating of insects, rich in protein may be cultural. In other countries insects are part of the diet. Roasted and salted grasshoppers can be bought in Mexico city. Edible insects keep Australian aborigines from starving. And even in the United States of America there are gourmet food stores that carry chocolate-coated bees and ants. Is it not possible that the Baptist was a little ahead of us, that is, that locusts and other insects may fill a future need?” (Hendriksen, p. 218).

and wild honey. John would give the aura of a holy man but he was much more than that. John symbolizes the breaking of the centuries of prophetic silence recognized by the Jews themselves (cf. 1 Maccabees 4:46; 9:27; 14:41). Here is a new thing; a voice from God out of the silence. Prophecy appears again to the people of Israel.

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

Then Jerusalem was proceeding out to him, Imperfect tense in the Greek stressing a repeated process over some time. Matthew does not say all Jerusalem came out to be baptized by John as does Mark, perhaps because Jerusalem was the center of opposition to Jesus' later public ministry.

and all Judea, This would be a larger area than merely Jerusalem.

and all the surrounding region of the Jordan. Mark does not have this phrase though it is a natural fact that could be presumed. What the gospel writers are stressing is that there was a great response to John's baptism.

Matt. 3:6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts do not have the word *river*.

And they were being baptized by him This matches "were coming out" and underscores the success of John's mission.

in the Jordan river, They came out to John where he was.

while confessing their sins John's baptism was not for ceremonial purification but rather to flee from the coming judgment. They confessed their sins during the actual baptism.

Matt. 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"

Note on a variant reading: Only two Greek manuscripts (*Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*) do not have *his*.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism These are the opponents of John and later of Jesus. They are mentioned as acting together again only in 16:1. They are better known for their mutual hostility.

The text does not say they were baptized although some may have been sincere about believing. Most probably came out of curiosity (their lack of belief is pointed out in 21:25-27,32).

Many may have been so angered by John's message that they did not submit to baptism (see Luke 7:29,30).

he said to them, "Offspring of vipers! This is not calculated to win potential converts! Jesus would later use the same phrase in His own attacks on the Pharisees (12:34; 23:33). This comment is only used in reference to Pharisees in Matthew.

Who has warned you to flee from the coming wrath?” Obviously John doubted their sincerity in coming to his baptism. For further emphasis on the coming wrath see 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 3:6.

Matt. 3:8 Therefore produce fruit worthy of repentance.

Therefore produce fruit worthy of repentance The singular fruit is a collective noun. Jesus would later use this same metaphor (7:16-20). John wants concrete evidence of their repentance, not just the mere citing of words.

Matt. 3:9 Don't just say, 'We're safe—we're the descendants of Abraham' That proves nothing. God can change these stones here into children of Abraham.

Note on a variant reading: A couple of manuscripts do not have *among yourselves*.

And do not begin to consider to say among yourselves, John anticipates a typical objection they would have to his baptism.

'We have Abraham as our father.' They considered that physical descent from Abraham granted them an automatic immunity from God's coming wrath. Reliance should not be on race. Abraham's children are those who share his faith.

For I say to you, that God is able to raise up from these stones children to Abraham. Isaiah said that Abraham was the “rock from which you were hewn” (51:1,2) but John says that any other stone would serve God's purpose. The close similarity in Aramaic and Hebrew between the words for *stones* and *children* is a devastating play on words.

Matt. 3:10 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; The imminence of the judgment is stressed by the adverb “even now” which is placed first in the Greek sentence.

every tree, therefore, that does not produce good fruit is cut down

and thrown into the fire. This metaphor is repeated verbatim in 7:19 by Jesus. The idea of an unfruitful tree cut down and thrown in the fire is common in Jewish literature.

Matt. 3:11 I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts do not have the words *after me*.

As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, contrasts to Jesus Himself who will baptize them with the Spirit. John's baptism is "with reference to repentance" or "because of repentance" or "in agreement with repentance." The phrase is best understood this way rather than "unto repentance."

but he who is coming after me This phrase seems to be a technical term for the Messiah.

is more powerful than I, John is merely the forerunner.

of whom I am not worthy to carry his sandals. The word can also mean "take off" his sandals. A Rabbi's disciple was expected to act virtually as his slave but to remove the shoes was too low a task even for a disciple.

he himself The word "He" is placed first in the Greek sentence for emphasis. This contrasts John's ministry with Jesus.

will baptize you with the Holy Spirit Jesus' baptism will be with the Holy Spirit.

and fire. This has reference to the purifying work of the Holy Spirit in those who believe in Jesus.

Matt. 3:12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

And his winnowing fork is in his hand, The winnowing fork is used by the coming Messiah to throw the mixed wheat and chaff in the air. This is usually done on high ground during a good wind which separates the lighter chaff from the heavier wheat.

and he will thoroughly clean out his threshing floor; The cleansing will be thorough.

and he will gather together his wheat into the barn, The wheat is put into storage (13:30).

but the chaff The chaff becomes fuel.

he will burn up with unquenchable fire. The fire that purifies will also destroy all that which is worthless. This is the second metaphor of judgment (vs. 10). "Unquenchable" has the same meaning as eternal in 18:8; 25:41. It is the Greek word *asbestos*. Note also that the word *His* is used 3 times in this verse.

The Messiah Reveals Himself to the World And Is Baptized (3:13-17)

The babe born in Bethlehem has grown to be a man. He will now reveal Himself to the world. His first public act is to be baptized by John in Jordan River.

Matt. 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

Then Jesus arrived from the Galilee The same term is used of both John and Jesus.

to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. Jesus chose to be baptized by John and to identify with him. In all four gospels, Jesus submits to John's baptism (though the baptism of Jesus is not recorded in the Gospel of John). Jesus came for the purpose of being baptized.

Matt. 3:14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

Note on a variant reading: Two Greek manuscripts (*Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*) along with one Egyptian manuscript read *he was attempting* rather than *John was attempting*.

But John was attempting to prevent him, Matthew does not explain how John recognized Jesus as different from the crowd. It is possible that they had had some previous contact. Luke 1:36 tells us of the joint traditions between Jesus' and John's family (Elizabeth being a kinsmen to Mary). Yet we do not have a clear answer as to how John knew Jesus was the Messiah before the Holy Spirit came down and identified Him.

saying, "I myself have need to be baptized by you, John recognized that he was the one needing the baptism.

and do you yourself come to me?" He cannot understand why Jesus would submit to his baptism.

Matt. 3:15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

Note on variant readings: After consented two Syriac manuscripts read *to be baptized*. Between verses 15 and 16 two Latin manuscripts describe the baptism of Jesus as follows: *And when Jesus was being baptized a great light flashed (a tremendous light flashed around) from the water, so that all who gathered were afraid.*

But Jesus answered and said, "Let it be so now; These are the first words of Jesus in Matthew's gospel.

for in this way it is proper to fulfill all righteousness." Many interpretations of what this difficult phrase means. The best answer seems to be that Jesus is referring to fulfilling God's will in the establishment of the salvation which He promised. Righteousness is not just being good or correct according to the Mosaic law but it is the same as having an obedient relationship to God.

Then he consented. John finally agreed.

Matt. 3:16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him.

Note on a variant reading. Some manuscripts do not have the words *to Him* in the text. Two Greek manuscripts (*Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*), along with one Egyptian manuscript and the testimony of the Church Father Irenaeus, do not have the word *the* before Spirit and again before God. Instead of *descending* as some manuscripts read *descending out of heaven as*. Two Greek manuscripts (*Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*), along with a couple of Latin manuscripts, do not have the word and.

When Jesus was baptized, Why was Jesus baptized? Not because He was a sinner, nor simply to identify with John's movement. In being baptized Jesus showed His solidarity with the people in their need. Jesus was baptized because as the Messiah He was a representative person, the embodiment of Israel whether as King or as righteous servant (cf. Isaiah 53:11; both concepts emerge in vs. 17). Jesus had not need of repentance but Israel did and here He identifies with His people.

he came up immediately from the water; He came up immediately because there was no need to confess sin.

and behold, the heavens were opened to him, Common metaphor in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 1:1; Isaiah 64:1) and it refers (as here) to a key episodes of God's revelation and provision (see Acts 7:56; 10:11; John 1:51). The two worlds (the visible and invisible) merge.

Just as the veil of the temple was rent in twain to symbolize the perfect access of all men to God (Heb 10:19,20), so here the heavens are 'rent asunder' (same Greek word) to show how near God is to Jesus and Jesus to God (Griffith, cited by Broadus, p. 60).

and he saw the Spirit of God Luke tells us the Spirit came down in bodily form (Luke 3:22).

descending as a dove, and coming upon him. This reminds us of Genesis 1:2 the Spirit "hovering" over the water. The dove is sometimes used as a symbol for Israel (Hosea 7:11).

We should not assume that Jesus had no previous experience with the Holy Spirit. This incident symbolizes the beginning of His Messianic work. In the ancient world there was frequent association between dove and deity. The gospels do not tell us whether the crowds witnessed the event, but the silence is probably to be interpreted as meaning they did not.

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

Note on variant readings: After *said* a few manuscripts read *to Him*. Instead of *This is* some manuscripts read *You are*.

And behold, a voice from heaven said, The phrase refers to a “divine voice.”

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The Father testifies to the Son by means of the Holy Spirit (Trinity). He is now formally marked out as the Son of God in conjunction with the beginning of His work. Jesus is the unique Son, the powerful anointed one (in analogy of triumphant king) and the humble Servant who obediently accomplishes the will of God, eventually through suffering and death. This dual picture is found again later in the Gospel, through the verbatim repetition of the same words (17:5). “Beloved” may be an independent title of the Messiah.

Summary To Chapter 3

Chapter 3 picks up the life of Jesus some thirty years after the end of chapter 2. The first section of chapter 3 (verses 1-12) record the sudden appearance of the forerunner or herald of the Messiah—John the Baptist. He arrives as a fulfillment of Isaiah 40:1-3. John preached in the wilderness of Judea and Matthew records that large crowds from all parts of the country came to see and hear him.

John’s appearance, lifestyle, and message of impending judgment was reminiscent of the Old Testament prophet Elijah. He implored the crowds to be converted, that is to change their way of living. This caused many to be baptized by him while they were confessing their sins.

Among those who arrived at John’s baptism were the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees were the religious legalists while the Sadducees were the unbelieving wealthy landowners. John had strong words for each of them. He made it clear that mere physical descent from Abraham was not enough to save them. God could raise up stones to make children of Abraham if He so desired. The point is that God did not need them, they needed Him!

John emphasized the judgment was impending—the Lord was about to bring about a separation between the grain and the worthless chaff. The grain went into the barns, the chaff was to be burned. Likewise those who believed were to be brought into God’s kingdom, those who did not, to judgment.

John made it clear that One greater than him was about to arrive. John’s baptism was with water, the One coming after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. This referred to the Day of Pentecost as well as the final judgment of the wicked.

The next section (verses 13-17) records the arrival of Jesus to be baptized by John. John objects by saying that it should be the other way around—Jesus should baptize him. The first public statement of Jesus indicates that it is necessary for Him to be baptized to fulfill all the righteous requirements. Since Jesus is the One for whom John prepares the way, He cannot remain unrelated to the work of John. It comes as a great surprise to John that Jesus submits Himself to John’s baptism. John, like the rest of

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us, need Jesus' baptism. Jesus needs no baptism of repentance nevertheless He undergoes baptism as an example for all who follow Him in belief.

After Jesus was baptized He went immediately out of the water. There was no confession of sins for Him as was the case with the other people who were baptized.

The baptism served as the formal beginning of His ministry wherein He received the anointing of the Holy Spirit together with the Father's attesting of His Sonship (note the Trinitarian association). All of this is in keeping with the will of God who will bring salvation to the world. John and Jesus have performed their respective roles, "fulfilling all righteousness."

The Trinity was together at Jesus' coming out of the water—the Holy Spirit came upon Him as a dove, and the voice of the Father from heaven giving approval of His Son. Hence we have the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus.

**Matthew
Chapter 4**

He had left home under a powerful impulse with the Jordan and baptism in view. The baptism was the decisive act. Whatever more it might mean, it meant farewell to the past life of obscurity and consecration to a new, high, unique vocation (A.B. Bruce, p. 88).

Jesus will spend forty days and nights fasting in the wilderness. During this time He will be tempted by the devil. The temptation concludes Matthew's account of events connected with Jesus' entrance into the public ministry. Only the synoptics and Hebrews (2:18; 4:15) mention His testing. Jesus now moves from innocence to virtue. Purity untested to purity tested.

The account of Jesus' temptation is closely related to the preceding narrative concerning His baptism. The specific connection between His baptism and temptation is in the term "God's Son." Jesus is proclaimed "Son of God" by the two other members of the Trinity immediately following His baptism. Now the question arises, "Will He be faithful to His calling, especially in the circumstances of testing?"

In the story of His temptation, there is a parallel to the nation's experience in the wilderness. The sequence of Matthew's account is the same as Exodus:

After the deliverance from Egypt and the establishment of the covenant relationship at Mt. Sinai, Israel experienced a time of testing in the wilderness.

1. The people leave Egypt and cross the Red Sea (baptism into Moses 1 Corinthians 10:1-2)
2. At Mt. Sinai they enter into a special relationship with God as His son (Exodus 19:4-6) Divine declaration (voice of Father at Jesus' baptism).
3. The time of testing in the wilderness comes after the baptism and declaration with both Israel and Jesus.

Furthermore the answers which Jesus gives are from Deuteronomy 6-8—the very passage that describes Israel's experience in the wilderness. Deuteronomy gives the theological commentary on Israel's time in the wilderness.

Jesus recapitulates their history in His own person. He is the embodiment of Israel and the fulfilled of all her hopes repeats in His own experience the experience of Israel—with of course, the one major difference. Israel failed the test, Jesus succeeded! The temptations are basically the same as God's peoples. (1 Corinthians 10:13). They come to test both the person and program of Jesus.

Adam And Eve

There are further parallels with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), described as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:16) which suggests these temptations are typical of what mankind faces.

The Purpose For The Temptation

1. It gave proof of His true humanity (Hebrews 2:18) that He could be tested. Jesus was genuinely human.
2. It is part of His example to us (1 John 2:6).
3. The temptation formed part of His personal discipline (Hebrews 5:7-9).
4. It helped Him be a sympathizing intercessor (Hebrews 4:15).
5. It formed part of the great conflict in which the “seed of woman” was to “bruise the head of the serpent.” (Genesis 3:15). In this first great struggle of the conflict the destined conqueror came off completely victorious.

The Temptation of Jesus (4:1)

Before beginning His public ministry, Jesus will be put to the test by the devil. Three specific temptations that Jesus experienced are recorded by Matthew.

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

Then Both Matthew and Mark link the temptation to Jesus’ baptism while Luke inserts Jesus’ genealogy between the two, suggesting a contrast between Him and Adam. Adam was tested in the perfect environment of Eden yet he fell. On the other hand, Jesus was tested in the hardship of the wilderness, yet He triumphed.

Jesus was led up The passive verb translated “led up” does not express a reluctance on Jesus’ part. It simply means Jesus was willing to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. It also refutes the idea that Jesus went into this temptation on His own accord. This was God the Father’s timing for Jesus.

Mark says “driven” and Luke says “full of the Holy Spirit.” Led up emphasizes the movement from the Jordan valley into higher land. This would be in the solitary regions of the wilderness where the wild beasts, but no human, lived.

into the desert The desert would be a suitable place for temptation. The temptation story is found in the synoptic gospels which all locate the testing of Jesus in the wilderness. The exact location is unknown. Some commentators believe He went east of the Jordan river while most assume He went west. A few believe it was the wilderness of Sinai based upon the fact that Moses and Elijah also fasted there. John Broadus writes:

It was certainly a very retired and wild part of the 'wilderness' for Mark says, with one of his vivid descriptive touches 'and he was with the wild beasts.' A tradition which appears first in the time of the Crusades places it in a mountain just west of Jericho, hence called Quarantania (a place of forty days comp. *quarantine*, a forty days detention). This mountain is six or eight miles from the traditional place of the baptism, and rises some fifteen hundred feet almost perpendicular from the plain of Jordan which is here at its widest part. In the rocky face of the mountain are the openings of numerous artificial caves, made by monks of the Crusading period perhaps some of them by old Jewish Eremites. But to our modern feeling it seems unlikely that our Lord withdrew to a cave, and probably that he went further away from the populous plain of Jericho. Some think (Schaff) that Quarantania may have been the place of the third temptation, if not of those preceding, which is quite possible. After all, it may be that a special providence caused the precise locality of this and many other events in our Lord's history to be left unknown, for the purpose of restraining superstition (Broadus, p. 60).

The desert is not only associated with demonic activity (Isaiah 13:21; 34:14; Matthew 12:43; Revelation 18:2) it is also the place where Israel was tempted.

by the Spirit This is in direct continuity with the descent of the Spirit upon Him in the preceding chapter. The same spirit that brought Him to the Jordan to be baptized now brings Him to the temptation.

The Spirit is active in Jesus' life and ministry. The same spirit that brought Jesus into the world (1:20) and confirmed the Father's acknowledgment of His Sonship (3:16,17) now leads Him into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

In this parallel account of the testing of Israel it is the Lord who leads Israel into the wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:2). The ultimate test is from God (cf. Job 1:6-12). As God's Son, Jesus proves to be triumphant in testing. We find that the Holy Spirit was active in all phases of Jesus' life and ministry.

1. Conception

The Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit was involved in the conception of Jesus.

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God (Luke 1:35 CEV).

The Holy Spirit, through the Virgin Mary, conceived the child Jesus.

2. Baptism

The Holy Spirit was also involved in Jesus' baptism. When John baptized Him, the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, identifying Jesus as the Messiah.

And the Holy Spirit came down upon him in the form of a dove. A voice from heaven said, “You are my own dear Son, and I am pleased with you” (Luke 3:22 CEV).

3. Temptation

Luke records that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness (Luke 4:1 ESV).

4. Public Ministry

The public ministry of Jesus was performed through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country (Luke 4:14 ESV).

Jesus Himself testified that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:18,21 ESV).

5. Miracles

During His public ministry, Jesus performed miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But when I force out demons by the power of God’s Spirit, it proves that God’s kingdom has already come to you (Matthew 12:28 CEV).

The signs He performed were done in obedience to the Father through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

6. The Resurrection

The Holy Spirit was also at work in the resurrection of Christ.

It stands to reason, doesn’t it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he’ll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ’s! (Romans 8:11 MsgB).

The Spirit of God brought Jesus back from the dead.

Therefore, as we study Scripture we find the Holy Spirit played a vital role in the life and ministry of Jesus being involved with Him from His conception through His resurrection.

to be tempted Whereas the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness it is the Devil that does the tempting. The Spirit's role is prior to the Devil's. It was not the desire of Jesus to court temptation. The translation "tempt" derives its sinister meaning from the context.

How can God tempt someone? Carson comments about this difficult issue. That Jesus should be "led by the Spirit" to be tempted "by the devil" is not stranger than Job 1:6-2:7 or 2 Samuel 24:1 (1 Chron. 21:1). Recognizing that "to tempt" (*peirazo*) also means "to test" in a good or bad sense somewhat eases the problem. In Scripture "tempting" or "testing" can reveal or develop character (Gen 22:1; Exod. 20:20; John 6:6; 2 Cor 13:5; Rev 2:2) as well as to solicit evil (1 Cor 7:5; 1 Thess. 3:5). For us to "tempt" or "test" God is wrong because it reflects unbelief or attempted bribery (Exod. 17:2, 7 [Ps 95:9]; Deut. 6:16 [Matt 4:7]; Isa 7:12; Acts 5:9; 15:10). Moreover God uses means and may bring good out of his agents' evil motives—see Joseph's experience (Gen 50:19,20). In Jesus' "temptations" God clearly purposed to test him just as Israel was tested, and Jesus' response proves that he understood (Carson, p. 112).

R.T. France writes the following of Jesus' temptation.

To refer to this episode as the temptation of Jesus is doubly misleading. Firstly, the verb *peirazo* (vv.1,3) in Matthew always signifies testing (and in its 36 NT occurrences it clearly implies tempting to do wrong only in 1 Cor 7:5; Jas. 1:13,14); see also John 6:6; 2 Corinthians 13:5 for some clear examples of this primary sense. Satan's intention was, no doubt, to persuade Jesus to do wrong, but the initiative was with God, and the whole emphasis of the story is on the testing of Jesus' reaction to his Messianic vocation as Son of God. Secondly, to speak of "*the* temptation" is misleading because Matthew does not suggest it (and Luke 4:13, 'until an opportune time', clearly denies) that this was the sum total of Jesus' struggle against Satanic suggestions (cf. Heb 4:15); it is rather a specific examination of Jesus' newly-revealed relationship with God (R.T. France, pp. 96,97).

by the devil. The Greek word *diabolos* is borrowed in Latin as *diabolus*, from which comes the French *diable*, and the English word *devil*. It is the term normally used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew name Satan (Job 1:6ff; 2:1; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Zechariah 3:1,2).

We should briefly consider what the Bible has to say about this personage.

According to Scripture, the career of Satan, or the Devil, has been steadily going down since his creation. Originally he was created as a perfect being without any sin. At some unknown time in the past, he decided to rebel against God. When he rebelled against God this beautiful creature became the Devil or the "adversary." It is clear from Scripture that God did not create the Devil. This creature became the Devil when he decided to rebel against God.

Satan was cast out of God's presence because of his sin. The Book of Job informs us that he now has some access to God's presence but only when the Lord allows it.

Satan is presently deceiving mankind. The Bible calls him He the "prince of this world," "the god of this age" and "the prince of the power of the air."

This deception will continue until his future judgment. During the time of the Great Tribulation, he will be cast down to the earth. After the Second Coming of Christ he will be thrown into the bottomless pit for a thousand years. After the thousand years, the Devil will be released for a short time. He will then be thrown into the lake of fire forever (Revelation 20:10 ff.). Thus will be the end of his inglorious career.

Lenski comments on the devil's part in Jesus' temptation.

We may take it that Satan knew all about this man Jesus, miraculously conceived and born by Mary and then living so long and so quietly in Nazareth. As an invisible spectator he beheld what transpired after the baptism at the Jordan. So this was God's Messiah come to crush Satan, destroy his works, and to erect the kingdom of God among men. At once the devil resolved to break this divine champion. He had conquered the first Adam, he would conquer the second, and that at once. Before this Jesus got under way with his work, Satan, would lay him low with his old cunning (Lenski p. 138).

Tempted as the Son of God (4:2-4)

The first temptation concerns His identity as the Son of God.

Matt. 4:2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

And after fasting We are not told the reason for the fast. It was spontaneous not something ascetic or self-denying. In a place where there was no food, Jesus did not desire any.

forty days and forty nights. The forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness after His baptism are a miniature of the forty years Israel spend in the wilderness after their baptism in the Exodus whereas God's son they were called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1).

Mark records the possibility that there were 40 days of continuous temptation. The time of His fasting, 40 days and 40 nights would remind Matthew's readers of both Moses (Exodus 34:28) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8) who fasted forty days and nights. However comparisons between Jesus and them are useless since His body was unaffected by sin.

The reference to Moses fasting forty days and nights in Deuteronomy 9:9 occurs in the context of Deuteronomy chapters 6-8 which serves as a basis for the passage.

The Gospel According To Matthew

There is no indication in Matthew whether Jesus' fast was a total abstinence from food or merely living on what little could be found in the wilderness. Luke 4:2 tells us that He ate nothing in those days.

he then became hungry The Jews sometimes fasted by abstaining from food but not abstaining from drink. We do know that Jesus' fast was serious enough to cause Him real hunger. The point is that the Son of God had genuine human physical needs.

This is one of many ironies we find in Matthew's gospel.

1. Jesus dies the death of a sinner, but came to save His people from their sins (1:21).
2. He stays hungry for an extended period (4:2) but twice He miraculously feeds others who are hungry (14:13-21; 15:29-39).
3. He will not turn stones to bread for himself (4:3-4) but Jesus gives His own life as bread for people (26:26).
4. He grows tired (8:24) but offers others rest (11:28);
5. Jesus is called the devil but casts out demons (12:22-32);
6. Though Jesus is the King Messiah He pays tribute (17:24-27);
7. He is sold for thirty pieces of silver but gives his life a ransom for many (20:28);

Matt. 4:3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread"

And the tempter came The tempter came to Him in outwardly in some type of visible form. This same phrase will later be used of the religious leaders who tempt Jesus.

and said to him, The tempter comes to Him to accomplish His purpose while Jesus is physically vulnerable (cf. Genesis 3:1-7). Temptation was to act on His own initiative apart from God's perfect will. Satan wanted Jesus to use His personal power to prevent the Spirit-led hunger. Was He to trust God?

"If indeed you are the Son of God, The declaration made (3:17) is now being put to the test.

We could translate this "Let us assume for sake of argument you are the Son of God." Similar knowledge of Jesus is found among the demons (Mark 1:24). As in Genesis 3:1; Job 1:9; 2:4,5 Satan starts the temptation by raising a cloud of doubt.

command that these stones become loaves of bread." If God was able to turn these stones into children of Abraham (3:9) Jesus certainly could

turn them into bread. The temptation was not to see if Jesus had the power to work a miracle—that was understood to be true. The temptation was to see whether He was going to remain obedient to the Father. Fasting and hunger at this stage was the will of the Father.

Tempter was trying to have Jesus perform an ill-timed expression of His power. Will Jesus exercise His power for His own ends or will He accept the pain and suffering that is in the Father's will? That Jesus had the power to satisfy physical need by miraculous means was proved by later miracles (14:15-21; 15:32-38). The act was not wrong in itself.

It has been noted that the order of the temptations is different in Luke and in Matthew. A.H. McNeile gives a possible explanation:

The three temptations arise from the Lord's consciousness of His divine Sonship. Luke follows a geographical sequence, the only change of locality, from the desert to Jerusalem, occurring last. Matthew arranges a psychological climax: the first temptation is to doubt the truth of the revelation just received, the second to test it, and the third to snatch prematurely at the Messiahship which it involves. In actual fact, however, it is probable that the Lord was assailed in all three ways during His period of trial, and perhaps throughout His life (McNeile, p. 37).

Matt. 4:4 But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'"

But he answered and said, "It is written, Jesus answers with Scripture (Deuteronomy 8:3).

'Man will not live by bread alone, It refers back to Israel's grumbling about the manna (Numbers 11:4-9).

but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' " Happiness in not simply satisfying human desires but consists of trusting God.

This then is a temptation to the body or the desire of the flesh. (cf. Genesis 3:6 'good for food'). The tempter wanted Jesus dissatisfied with God's provision. Jesus relives Israel's experience in the wilderness but in victory rather than defeat.

Tempted as the Son of David (4:5-7)

Matt. 4:5 Then the devil took Him into the holy city; and he had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple.

Then As in verse 1, Matthew again begins with "then"

the devil took him into the holy city, This is a common designation for Jerusalem (27:53; cf. Isaiah 52:1; Nehemiah 11:1,18). The expression was rare among later Jews probably due to their banishment from the city by the Romans who renamed Aelia Capitolina.

Here and in verse 8, whether literally or in a vision is not clear. Some commentators suggest that the physical impossibility of a mountain commanding a world-wide view suggests this was a vision. Whatever the case, the temptation was inward.

and stood him upon the pinnacle of the temple Word translated *temple* usually refers to entire temple complex but is perhaps used here in the narrower sense.

We are not exactly sure what is meant by this phrase. Suggestions have included:

- (1) The east corner of the south wall of the temple which overlooked a deep ravine
- (2) The roof of the temple or a projection of it
- (3) The lintel or superstructure of a temple gate
- (4) A tower in the temple precincts.

Wherever it took place, it would have been on a dangerous spot.

Matt. 4:6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will give his angels charge of you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone’”

Note on a variant reading: After *down* a few manuscripts read *from there*.

and he said to him, “If indeed you are the Son of God, Again, for the sake of argument, if you are the Son of God.

throw yourself down; Simon Magus (Acts 8) is said to have attempted this.

for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ We learn a valuable lesson from this episode—Satan can quote Bible. However when he quotes Scripture he does it out of context. Here he leaves out an important part of the quotation.

and ‘they will lift you up in their hands, This is from Psalm 91:12.

lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ ” Here Jesus is tempted to put Himself into mortal danger and force God to save Him. Satan wants Jesus to needlessly put Himself in danger. The struggle is between Jesus and Satan, we should not assume there were other witnesses for this passage to make sense.

Matt. 4:7 Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test’”

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, Jesus again is appealing to Scripture.

“You will not tempt the Lord your God.” You do not put God to the test. This refers to the incident at Massah where the people demanded signs of God’s presence (Exodus 17:1-7). What was wrong for God’s son Israel to do is also wrong for God’s Son Jesus.

Therefore it is a temptation to the mind (the lust of the eyes). to be dissatisfied with God’s method. The words are not meant to command the devil not to test Jesus. By refusing to jump, Jesus chooses the path of continuing danger and hardship. There is also the temptation to bypass the cross. Real trust does not need to test. Jesus will only perform miracles when they are absolutely necessary, no supernatural sideshow.

Tempted as the Son of Abraham (4:8-11)

Matt. 4:8 Again, the devil took him up onto an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

Again, the devil took him up onto an exceedingly high mountain, There is a question as to whether this should be taken literally, particularly in view of the next statement. The passage does have literal associations. Moses went to the top of Mt. Nebo and was told to survey the Promised Land to look in every direction (Deuteronomy 31:1-4).

and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. This means the world and all its wealth. How he accomplished this we are not told.

Matt. 4:9 And he said to Him, “I will give You all these things if You will fall down and worship me”

And he said to him, “All these things I will give to you, if you fall down and worship me.” Three ideas involved in this temptation.

1. To gain only an earthly rather than an earthly and spiritual dominion over the world.
2. To gain it at once.
3. To gain it as an act of worship to the ruler of this world making the Messiah Satan’s vice-regent.

The devil’s offer is a parody of what God has already promised the Messianic king (Psalm 2:8; cf Psalm 78:2; Revelation 11:15).

That the devil had dominion over the world, implied here and explicit in Luke 4:6, is stated also in John 12:31 (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19).

Matt. 4:10 Then Jesus told him, “Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him.”

Note on a variant reading. After the Greek word translated *go away*, many manuscripts read *after Me*. These parallel the words spoken to Peter in 16:23.

Then Jesus said to him, “Go away, Satan! This is the first time the term “Satan” is used in Matthew. Jesus now dismisses him.

For it is written: ‘You will worship the Lord your God, and him alone you will serve.’ ” Jesus replies to the implication of his offer. For the third time Jesus answered the Devil with Scripture.

The passage quoted refers back to the golden calf incident (Exodus 32:1-6). This is the culminating temptation. It is to the pride of life (cf. Genesis 3:5 you will be like God) to be dissatisfied with God Himself. The temptation is to manipulate God’s program to achieve our own ends. He would have been only a figurehead king if He worshipped Satan.

Matt. 4:11 Then the Devil left Him, and immediately angels came and began to serve Him.

Then the devil left him; This was only temporary. As the baptism of Jesus represents an identification with the people of God, so also does the story of Jesus’ testing. Israel experienced testing in the wilderness for forty years while the Son of God, Jesus experienced testing in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. But Jesus succeeded where Israel failed. The things offered to Jesus are rightfully His yet He will receive them as the obedient servant to the Father. The truth found throughout the gospels is that true greatness lies not in our asserting of our own selves but rather in humility, service and suffering.

Jesus declares the rightness of the great commandment (Deuteronomy 6:5) as well as His own submission to it.

The Greek word behind 3:15 (then [John] consented”) and 4:11 (“then [the devil] left him”) is identical. Though the verb is used in two different ways, the two passages are parallel in that both John and the devil, wittingly or unwittingly, were trying to deter Jesus’ appointed course but failed.

and behold, angels came and began to minister to him. The food and the angelic help which He had refused (vss. 4,7), were now given to Him as victor.

The following lessons that can be learned from Jesus’ temptation include:

1. Like Jesus, the Christian will be both tested and tempted. The question is not, “If,” but “When.” We will be tempted to sin.
2. The tempter came to Jesus at His most vulnerable moment—when He was tired and hungry. We should expect the same.
3. As humankind’s representative, Jesus, the last Adam, was obedient in His temptation. On the other hand, the first Adam, also representing

mankind, miserably failed. Therefore through Jesus we can succeed, however if we allow the old Adamic nature to prevail, we will fail.

4. Jesus resisted the devil by appealing to Scripture three times in succession. We should do the same. Therefore the importance of knowing God's Word is stressed.

5. Scripture says we have a High Priest who, having himself been tempted in all ways, is able to help us when we are tempted (Hebrews 4:14-16). Jesus understands what we are going through.

6. What Jesus was offered by Satan—the rulership of this world—is something that He has now earned through His sinless life and His death on Calvary's cross. This reiterates an important biblical lesson—we should not go about trying to get the right things in the wrong way (e.g. Jacob and his birthright).

Jesus Moves From Nazareth To Capernaum (4:12-16)

After His temptation and the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus will move from His hometown in Nazareth to the city of Capernaum alongside the Sea of Galilee.

Matt. 4:12 When He heard that John had been put in prison, he went to Galilee.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *He heard* many manuscripts read *Jesus heard*.

Now when He heard that John had been put in prison, We are not told how He heard. We read of John in prison in 11:2 but must wait until 14:3,4 to find out the reason why. Both Matthew and Mark note that Jesus began His ministry in Galilee after the arrest of John. Matthew leaves the impression that Jesus was in Judea for some time after John's baptism. The fourth gospel shows that indeed this was the case.

he withdrew into the Galilee The motivation was John's arrest. Why did He move? Several possible answers:

1. He was fearful of arrest by being associated with John so He kept His distance. Problem with this view is that Herod Antipas ruled both Judea and Galilee.

2. John's ministry was completed so it was time for His to begin.

Matt. 4:13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and lived in Capernaum, which was alongside the sea, by the regions of Zebulon and Naphtali

Note on a variant reading: *Nazareth* is spelled several different ways in the manuscripts.

And leaving Nazareth, The word can also be translated “abandoned.” The reason for leaving Nazareth is not given (Luke has him rejected by His hometown 4:16-30), Matthew mentions this much later (13:53-58).

John performed his ministry in the wilderness, Jesus in populated areas. Josephus tells us that no town in the Galilee had a population smaller than 15,000 (Wars 3:43). Judea was on the road to nowhere while Galilee on the way to everywhere. The ministry of Jesus had better possibilities in Galilee which had a more tolerant atmosphere and was far removed from the Pharisees center of power.

he came and lived in Capernaum, which was alongside the sea, by the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali Little is known about Capernaum. It is mentioned in the other gospels as a scene of Jesus’ ministry, but only Matthew makes it clear that Jesus made it His home (cf. 9:1; 17:24-25). 8:20 suggests that it was only a temporary base in which Jesus and His disciples returned from time to time from the traveling ministry. The busy lakeside town would have a wider audience than Nazareth.

Matt. 4:14 to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah.

so that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, This is the fifth of the ten fulfillment quotations used by Matthew. It explains why Jesus spent His time in despised Galilee.

Matt. 4:15 The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, refers to the two northern tribes bordering on the Sea of Galilee.

on the road by the sea, *via Maris*. This road connected Damascus with Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast.

beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—This was the common designation for Galilee with its large Gentile population. Matthew does not refer to a mission of Jesus to the Gentiles. This may be a foreshadowing of what would occur after the resurrection.

Matt. 4:16 The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, And to those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, Upon them a light dawned.

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, It probably refers to the Jewish people (this term in Greek *laos* is used elsewhere in Matthew only for Israel) living in conditions of frustration and despair among the pagan Gentiles—who are the first to be privileged to see the fulfillment of God’s promises. The word “great” is emphasized in Greek.

and to the ones sitting in the land and in the shadow of death, Note the description of this area.

a light dawned to them.” Galilee, so often looked down upon both in political fortunes and in the eyes of the official Jewish religion, was in fact destined to play a crucial role in the unfolding of God’s plan of salvation. Again we have Matthew’s emphasis on outsiders in the purposes of God.

The Calling of His Disciples (4:17-22)

This verse marks one of the three main divisions in Matthew. Jesus will now begin His public ministry. First, He must call certain disciples to follow Him.

Matt. 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near”

Note on a variant reading: Three manuscripts do not have the words *repent* and *for* in their text.

From that time This verse serves as a turning point in the gospel of Matthew. It marks the beginning of His public ministry. The phrase is repeated verbatim in 16:21 where another major turning point of the gospel occurs.

Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” These are the same words that John the Baptist preached.

This passage serves as an important transition, bringing Jesus to Galilee where His ministry is to have its formal beginning. He has been prepared by the baptism and temptation in the wilderness, the stage is set. Word comes that John has been arrested—the work of the forerunner is now complete. Jesus comes to Nazareth and to Capernaum beside the sea, so significant to the prophecy of Isaiah. Jesus begins to proclaim the presence of the kingdom of God by word and deed—a great light appears to those who sit in darkness.

Matt. 4:18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *walking alongside* three manuscripts read *going alongside*.

And while he was walking alongside the Sea of Galilee, It is called the Lake of Gennesaret in Luke 5:1 and the Sea of Tiberias in John 21:1 and stands as a reminder of the fulfillment of Isaiah 8:23-9:1 which had just been quoted.

he saw two brothers, Simon the one called Peter, This anticipates the very important role he will have in this Gospel. The significance of the name Peter is not mentioned until 16:18.

and Andrew his brother, Andrew is mentioned again in Matthew only in the list of the twelve (10:2).

throwing a circular casting net, This word is found only here in the New Testament (technical word).

into the sea —for they were fishermen. They are about to have a new occupation.

Matt. 4:19 “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men”

Note on a variant reading: The words *to become* are not found in most manuscripts.

And he said to them, “Follow me, Literally, “Come behind Me.” It was a Rabbi’s call to discipleship.

and I will make you to become fishers of men.” The invitation is accompanied by a promise. Later Jesus will compare the Kingdom of Heaven to a dragnet (which is a different kind of net than the one referred to here) that gathered fish of every kind (13:47-48).

Matt. 4:20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Note on a variant reading: The word *their* is not found in the majority of manuscripts.

And immediately they left their nets and Matthew notes the brother’s immediate response. In Matthew’s gospel, response to the divine calling is immediate (see Joseph).

followed after him. This is a technical term referring to discipleship.

Matt. 4:21 And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them.

Note on a variant reading: Two manuscripts omit verses 21 and 22.

And after advancing from there, he saw two brothers, These two were partners with Simon Peter and Andrew (Luke 5:10)

Jacob the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, These two will figure prominently in the New Testament.

in the boat with their father Zebedee, putting their nets in order, They had returned from a previous outing

and he called them. It is implied He said the same thing to them as to Peter and Andrew.

Matt. 4:22 They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

And immediately Like Peter and Andrew they also leave immediately.

they left the boat and their father, and followed after him. Discipleship in the kingdom often involves separation from loved ones (10:35-37). James and John leave their boat and their father.

There is another important lesson in this passage. When Jesus called His disciples they were already busy. In Scripture, God finds people who are already working and then changes their occupation.

The Beginning of Jesus' Public Ministry (4:23-25)

After the call of the disciples, Jesus begins His public ministry. He goes around Galilee teaching, preaching and healing.

Matt. 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.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *He went around* some manuscripts read *Jesus went around*.

And he went around in all the Galilee, This is the beginning of His public ministry.

teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease Note the emphasis on teaching and preaching. Matthew will emphasize “their” synagogues.

and every sickness among the people. Nothing was impossible for Him.

Matt. 4:24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them.

Note on variant readings: A few manuscripts do not have the word *and* before the demon-possessed one. One Syriac manuscripts does not have *the demon possessed ones, and epileptics, and the paralyzed*.

And the news about him went out into all of Syria, This is probably in the Old Testament sense of the regions bordering Israel on the north and northeast.

and they brought to him all the ones ill with various sicknesses All who were sick were brought to Him.

and torments, This is a general description of diseases.

and the demon possessed ones, Demon-possession is a reality as evidenced by many New Testament examples.”

and epileptics, Literally “moonstruck.

and the paralyzed, Those who could not move certain parts of their body.

and he healed them. A comprehensive list of sicknesses Jesus healed.

Matt. 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 (KJV).

And great multitudes followed after him His ministry will always attract great crowds.

from the Galilee This was His homeland.

and Decapolis These are a league of ten cities which were predominately Gentile.

and Jerusalem They came all the way from Jerusalem.

and Judea Includes the area of Jerusalem and Benjamin.

and from beyond the Jordan. It is a symbolic picture of all that region of the world (i.e. the whole of Israel).

Summary to Chapter 4

The Holy Spirit which descended upon Him at His baptism was never to leave Him. After Jesus was baptized by John He was immediately led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

The purpose of this Spirit leading was to be tempted by the Devil. Adam was tested and he failed, now Christ must also be tempted in order that He may undo the results of Adam's failure.

Matthew records three temptations that took place at the end of a forty day fast. Satan began each temptation by saying something to the effect that, “If You really are the Son of God, and let's say for sake of argument that You are, then . . .”

The first temptation consisted of turning stones into bread. Later in His ministry Jesus would feed the multitude with the miraculous creation of bread. Yet this was not the time. The fast was Spirit-led and there was no reason for Jesus to cease fasting. Jesus would not take matters into His own hands and make the bread from the stones. He was here to do the will of the Father and His Father's will called for a fast. Jesus answered Satan with a quotation of Deuteronomy 8:3 which emphasizes that it is not merely bread by which a man lives. God the Father will provide for the needs of His Son.

Satan then tempts Jesus to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple. He encourages Jesus to do this rash act by quoting Scripture out

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of context. Jesus responds by properly quoting Scripture that you do not put the Lord God to the test (Deuteronomy 6:16).

The last temptation consisted of Satan offering to give up his dominion over the world kingdoms and hand them over to Jesus if Jesus would worship him. Jesus would then bypass the suffering and humiliation of the cross. The answer of Jesus was swift, “It is only the Lord God that is to be worshipped.”

Satan then left Jesus for a time and the angels came to minister to Him. The temptations of the devil were by no means over.

The next section (verses 12-17) describe the beginning of Jesus’ Galilean ministry. This took place perhaps a year after the baptism and temptation. Jesus said farewell to Nazareth, which had been His home, and settled in Capernaum, located on the Sea of Galilee’s northwestern shore. This was done in fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1,2.

John the Baptist had been jailed. Jesus then moved to the Galilee area to avoid a premature crisis with the religious leaders from Jerusalem. His time to die had not yet come.

Working from Capernaum, Jesus ministered to the entire northern territory, teaching, preaching, and healing. The area that was once in the despair of darkness had now seen a great light.

In the next section (verses 18-22) Jesus calls Peter and Andrew to follow Him as disciples. Later He calls James and John to follow Him. All of them immediately obey. The four of them had known Jesus for about a year and had spent some time in His company (we know this from the Gospel of John). Now they are to start training for full-time service.

In verses 23-25 we have the report of Jesus teaching, preaching, and healing, spreading to a wider basis. He goes north to Syria, Decapolis and Perea to the east and as far south as Judea. Huge crowds followed Him wherever He went. He healed all types of affliction. His healing was complete—there was no need for later treatment of these whom Jesus touched.

**Matthew
Chapter 5**

The Sermon on the Mount is the first of the five major discourses that Jesus delivers and that Matthew records. This sermon is recorded only by Matthew. The contents are, at heart, *Jewish*.

The practical application of the sermon, at a number of points, has been the subject of much debate. Some interpreters see it as an impossible standard that no one can attain while others feel it is something that all believers can reach. There are many variations between the two views. The following are some of the major views on how to interpret this portion of Jesus' teaching.

1. Many interpreters have seen two levels of commandments in Jesus' teaching. The stricter requirements are for those who wish to find a higher level of righteousness, such as the clergy, while the less strict are for the ordinary believer.
2. The sermon is to Jesus as the Law to Paul—an impossible standard. Both the Law and the Sermon on the Mount reveal the depths of our sinfulness and drive us to God in repentance.
3. Some have applied the sermon in a strict literal fashion. This has led to such things as castration and pacifism.
4. Protestant liberals use the sermon as their design for the social gospel—to feed the poor and help the downtrodden. They accept the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount without accepting the authority of the Teacher.
5. Classic Dispensationalism has limited sermon to the future millennial kingdom. Jesus offered a legitimate kingdom to the Jews but they rejected it. Therefore the requirements of the Sermon have been postponed until after Christ's second coming.
6. Seemingly, the best way to interpret the Sermon is that it remains the ideal or goal for all Christians in every age. However this ideal will never fully be realized until the kingdom age is brought into its fullness at Christ's return.

Part of the problem concerns the paradoxical statements of Jesus. For example in 5:16 He says "let your light shine before men, but in 6:1 He states "don't do your righteousness before them." In 5:34 we are told "do not swear an oath" yet in 26:63,64, Jesus gave a statement under oath. There are, of course, solutions to these paradoxical statements but their inclusion has led to diverse interpretations of Jesus' sermon. Whatever the interpretation is, the Sermon clearly teaches we cannot earn salvation. The teaching of Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount drives us to His cross for forgiveness. It shows us how that we should live, but that none of us have fully arrived at that place. It clearly shows us our need for a Savior. Secular psychiatrist, J.T. Fisher gives a fitting description of the Sermon's influence.

“If you were to take the sum total of all authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene—if you were to combine them and refine them and cleave out all the excess verbiage . . . and if you were to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of the Sermon on the Mount. And it would suffer immeasurably through comparison. For nearly two thousand years the Christian world has been holding in its hands the complete answer to its restless and fruitless yearnings. Here . . . rests the blueprint for successful human life with optimism, mental health, and contentment” (J. T. Fisher and L. S. Hawley, *A Few Buttons Missing*. Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1951, p. 273).

The Setting For The Sermon (5:1-2)

Jesus will withdraw from the multitudes and go up to a mountain to deliver this discourse to His disciples.

Matt. 5:1 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Vaticanus*, a few other manuscripts, do not have *to Him*.

And after seeing the crowds, he went up Jesus now moves away from the multitudes.

into the mountain This is not necessarily a specific place. It could be a general term as we might say “into the hills.” In two other places Jesus goes up to the mountain (14:23 to pray and 15:29 where He sat down and healed multitudes).

In Matthew, mountains are places where special events occur (4:8, the mountain of temptation, 17:1, the mountain of transfiguration; 28:16 the mountain of the resurrection appearances) though the exact mountain is never specified.

and sat down. It was customary in Judaism for the Rabbi to teach from a seated position. Thus Jesus sat down before He began to teach (cf. 13:2; 24:3).

His disciples came to him, The setting is similar to the Olivet discourse (24:3) where Jesus sat down and the disciples came to Him. It was a special time of teaching. This is the first time the word “disciples” is used in Matthew though the disciples are not yet specified.

Matt. 5:2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

and he opened his mouth and This is a Semitic idiom used at the beginning of a public address (see Acts 8:35; 10:34).

began to teach, The sermon is teaching, not proclamation. It has a beginning (5:1,2 and an end 7:28,29). Matthew sets the stage for the first and most impressive of the five discourses he records.

There may be an attempt to compare Jesus with Moses and his giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. Jesus, like Moses, is on the mountain when He gives the authoritative interpretation of the Law. But Jesus is far more than a new Moses and His teaching is not to be understood as a new Law. Jesus can teach as He does because of His identity as the Messiah, the Son of God. It is His teaching alone, not the oral tradition of the Pharisees, that gives the full meaning to the commandments of God. Jesus therefore assumes authority and explains to His disciples the way of righteousness.

them saying This sermon is for the disciples, not the general public. No call to repentance is given which assumes they have already repented.

The Blessings Of The Kingdom (5:3-12)

Jesus begins by telling His followers the blessing that will come for those who belong to His kingdom. He begins by giving us eight beatitudes. The word *beatitude* come from the Latin and means “blessings.”

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

Blessed The word means “one who is deeply fortunate” or “well off”—the inner joy of experiencing God’s salvation. The blessed ones are the deeply or supremely happy.

are the poor in spirit, Who are the poor in Spirit?” Some believe it refers to those who are economically poor (see Luke 6:20 “blessed are the poor”). It is argued that the two phrases “the poor” and “the poor in spirit” were synonymous at Jesus’ time. Jesus is referring to the condition of those who are financially poor—they have no recourse but to turn to God for their hope. The righteous poor were objects of God’s special concern (Psalm 9:18; 40:18; Isaiah 57:15; James 2:5).

Others believe that the words “in spirit” immediately tells us that the thought here is not of material poverty (as in Luke 6:20). The phrase alludes to an Old Testament theme which underlies all the beatitudes—the ‘poor’ or ‘meek’ are those who humbly trust God in contrast to the wicked who arrogantly set themselves up against God, and persecute His people. The emphasis is on piety and suffering, and on dependence on God, not on material poverty as such (for further discussion of this issue, see the question at the end of this chapter). The Bible says that Jesus became poor for us.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9)

for theirs The good news has that has now come to the poor is that the kingdom is “*theirs*” (which is emphatic in Greek).

is the kingdom of heaven Jesus emphasized this at the beginning of His Galilean ministry (Luke 4:18-19 citing Isaiah 61:1,2). Note the present tense of the verb, “is theirs.” The kingdom is theirs now, however, it will also be in the future when they will inherit its fullest blessings “they will inherit the earth,” “they will see God,” “great is your reward in Heaven.” These are sacred paradoxes referring to both present and future blessings.

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

Note on a variant reading. Some manuscripts switch the order of verses 4 and 5. This places *heaven and earth* next to each other. After *mourn* some manuscripts read *now*.

Blessed are those who mourn, Here we have a second allusion to Isaiah 61:2. The One anointed by the Spirit will comfort those who mourn. The Messiah will comfort the downtrodden and poor. The Rabbis accordingly referred to the Messiah as the “Comforter” because of His mission in the Messianic age. Those who mourn do so because of the slowness of God’s justice but now it’s time to rejoice because the kingdom has arrived.

for they will be comforted. God is the One who will comfort them (the so-called divine passive), where God is the unnamed source of comfort.

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

Blessed are the meek, This is the same Old Testament theme. The meek refers to those who do not throw their weight, about but rely on God to give them their due. It was used of wild horses that had been tamed—power under control. Meekness is a characteristic of Jesus’ own ministry (11:29; 12:15-21; 21:5). The promise is quoted from Psalm 37:11.

for they will inherit the earth. All will be theirs.

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

Blessed are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness, For spiritual hunger and thirst see Psalm 42:1,2; Isaiah 55:1,2.

for they will be filled. God will satisfy them.

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

Blessed are the merciful, The importance of mercy and its reciprocal nature is stressed in Matthew (6:12, 14,15; 9:13; 12:7; 18:21-35; 23:23).

for they will receive mercy. Those who give mercy will receive mercy.

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

Blessed are the pure in heart, This means those who love God with all his heart (Deuteronomy 6:5).

for they will see God. See God in the sense that they will be in His presence.

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

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not read *they themselves* but simply *they*. *They themselves* is emphatic in Greek, while the other reading does not place the same emphasis.

Blessed are the peacemakers, The peacemakers are the ones absence of selfish ambition (see Psalm 34:14).

for they themselves This is emphatic in Greek.

will be called sons of God. God is the supreme peacemaker (Ephesians 2:14-18; Colossians 1:20)

Matt. 5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the ones persecuted Persecution will be their experience.

for the sake of righteousness, Righteousness is more than just doing good, it refers to one's entire life dedicated to the things of God.

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This rounds off the series of beatitudes (cf. v. 3)

From a general description of the disciples character the sermon now turns to a direct address of Jesus to His disciples. This indicates the effect that character will have on their life and witness.

Matt. 5:11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you [falsely] because of me.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *they insult you* some manuscripts read *the men insult you*. After *evil* many manuscripts read *word* or *thing*. There is a question whether *falsely* should be in the text or not. Some manuscripts do not have it. Instead of *on account of Me* two manuscripts read *on account of righteousness*. There are two Syriac manuscripts which read *on account of My name*.

Blessed are you when they insult you, and persecute you, Insult and slander are the forms which persecution of Christians have taken place since the earliest of times (10:24,25, 1 Peter 3:16; 4:4, 14-16).

and say all evil against you [falsely], on account of me. They will accuse believers of things that are not true. The reason they do this is because of their hatred of Jesus.

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

Note on a variant readings: One Syriac manuscript does not have *who were before you*. After *who were before you* a few manuscripts have *their fathers*.

Rejoice, and be very glad, When this occurs we are to be happy.

because your reward is great in heaven; Believers will be rewarded for their withstanding persecution.

for in this same way they persecuted the prophets The prophets were persecuted and killed (see 23).

who were before you. The disciples of Jesus are the true successors to the Old Testament prophets.

Salt And Light (5:13-16)

Jesus gives the analogy of salt and light to His disciples.

Matt. 5:13 You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men (NIV).

You are the salt of the earth; Believers are now compared to salt.

but if the salt becomes tasteless, The question is how can salt become tasteless.

how will it be made salty again? It cannot be made salty again.

It is good for nothing anymore, Once salt loses its purpose it becomes valueless.

except to be thrown outside and trampled underfoot by men. There are many opinions as to what salt has reference to:

- (1) To give flavor.
- (2) As a preservative to prevent corruption.
- (3) Wisdom.

The Rabbi's commonly used salt for the image of wisdom (see Colossians 4:6). This may explain why the Greek word translated "lost its taste" actually means "become foolish." The believers in Jesus will make the earth a better place to live by their distinctive character.

Matt. 5:14 You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.

You are the light of the world. Believers are compared to light. Jesus Himself is the true light (John 1,9).

A city set upon a hill cannot be hidden. Light, like salt, affects its environment by being distinctive (see examples in the next verse).

Matt. 5:15 Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

Neither do they light a light and place it under the bushel basket, An obvious truth, nobody lights a light with the idea to hide it.

but upon the lampstand, and it gives light to all the ones in the house. A secret disciple is of no benefit.

Matt. 5:16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

In this same manner, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Your father a favorite expression of Matthew reflecting a major emphasis of Jesus' teaching.

The Righteousness Brought By Christ (5:17-20)

Jesus will explain that He has come to bring a fulfillment to the Law of Moses.

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

Do not every think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; Jesus does not want us to ever imagine that His purpose was to abolish any part of the Old Testament.

I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. Fulfill in what sense?

- (1)** Accomplish, obey.
- (2)** Bring out the full meaning.
- (3)** Complete—bring to its destined end.

This is the best answer. Jesus' coming fulfilled that which the Old Testament looked forward to. Christ is the end of the law (Romans 10:4) He fulfills it and transcends it.

Matt. 5:18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *and the Prophets* after *the Law*. One manuscript reads *heaven and earth will pass away but My words will not pass away* after *fulfilled*.

Truly I say to you, until the heaven and the earth pass away, In other words, never.

not the smallest letter The smallest letter in Hebrew is the *yod* .

or stroke The smallest stroke is the stroke that distinguishes some similar Hebrew letters

will by any means pass away from the Law, Not even this much will pass from the Law.

until everything is fulfilled Everything written will be fulfilled.

Matt. 5:19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) do not have the phrase *but whoever will do and teach them, he will be called great in the kingdom of heaven*.

Whoever therefore will break one of the least of these commandments, This refers to one of the insignificant commandments.

and will teach others to do the same, Those who teach others that is not important to follow everything Jesus said.

he will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; If they ignore the least, they will be the least.

but whoever will do and teach them, Those who teach the entire counsel of God's Word.

he will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Like the two previous verses this emphasizes the importance of the entire law.

Matt. 5:20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Note on a variant reading: One manuscript does not have verse 20.

For I say to you, that unless you righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, These two groups were known for their strict outward observance of the law.

you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. This verse dispels any suspicion of legalism. The ethical teaching of Jesus the Messiah, is the true meaning of the Law. As the Messiah, Jesus has come to bring both the law and the prophets to their intended meaning. God's purposes have a unity; yet a new stage in His purposes has been reached. Jesus alone and not the Pharisees can interpret the Law finally and authoritatively.

vs 21-48 should be read as a whole. It is six units of teaching introduced by "You have heard that it was said . . . But I say to you." It shows how the principles Jesus has set down can be put to practice.

Jesus' Views About Murder (5:21-26)

For Jesus, anger is the basis for murder. Therefore He speaks about the need to reconcile problems with fellow believers before the anger escalates into something greater.

Matt. 5:21 You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment.

You heard that it was **said to those of ancient times, "You will not murder;** The word is murder. "Kill" is an inadequate translation.

and whoever does murder, he will be liable to the judgment. This refers to the death penalty (Genesis 9:6; Exodus 21:12-14; Numbers 35:16-34).

Matt. 5:22 But I say, if you are angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the high council. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

Note on variant readings: After the words translated *his brother* many manuscripts have the phrase *without a cause*. Some manuscripts have the phrase *to his brother* before *You fool*.

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother Jesus goes behind the act itself to declare that the hatred which gives rise to murder is no less guilty in the sight of God.

will be liable to the judgment; This is not human judgment but the judgment of God. Notice that Jesus says nothing to abolish the death penalty as some have contended.

and whoever will say to his brother, "Raca," *Raka* literally means 'empty.' It is an Aramaic term of abuse, "idiot."

he will be liable to the council; Either the supreme Jewish council or local court. Here it symbolizes a more ultimate judgment.

whoever will say, “You fool,” This was another derogatory term.

he will be liable to the Gehenna of fire. Gehenna was the name of the place where Jerusalem’s rubbish was burnt. Used regularly by Jesus and Jewish writers to refer to the place of ultimate punishment. In contrast to human courts, Jesus threatens divine judgment on anger expressed in everyday insults.

Matt. 5:23 So if you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you.

If, therefore, you are offering your gift at the altar, This has reference to the offerings brought to the temple. It would make no sense to write this after A.D. 70 when there was no temple or altar.

and there you remember that your brother has something against you, There is a problem between you and a fellow believer

Matt. 5:24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

leave your gift there before the altar, The person in this situation is to cease his offering.

and go first and be reconciled with your brother, The priority is the reconciliation with his brother.

and then come and offer your gift. If God will punish anger, we cannot worship Him with grudges unsettled.

Matt. 5:25 Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.

Note on a variant reading: One Syriac manuscript does not have the phrase *and the judge*. After *the judge* many manuscripts read *he will deliver you over*.

Agree with your adversary quickly, This illustration expresses the urgency of reconciliation.

if you meet him in the road, This is a chance meeting between you and someone whom you have not reconciled the matter.

lest the adversary deliver you over to the judge, Unsettled matters can bring you before the judge.

and the judge to the attendant, The judge in turn delivers you over the man who can put you in prison.

and you may be thrown into prison. A grievance can lead to court and prison. Compare this illustration with Luke 12:58-59 and Matthew 18:23-35.

Matt. 5:26 I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Truly, I say to you, you will never come out from there, until you pay back the last penny. The penny refers to the smallest Roman coin. God's judgment, if not stopped by repentance and reconciliation, knows no half-measures.

In His interpretation of the truest meaning of the Mosaic commandment—and presentation of the level of righteousness required by the kingdom—Jesus goes far beyond the letter of the text. Jesus penetrates to the spirit of the commandment, since the person's conduct is one of the heart, or inner person, the transforming power of the kingdom must be experienced there.

Jesus' Views On Adultery (5:27-30)

The Lord shows that adultery starts by having the wrong desires. Therefore we should not even begin to entertain these thoughts.

Matt. 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'

Note on a variant reading: Several manuscripts have *to the ancients* after *said*.

You have heard that it was said, "You will not commit adultery." In the ancient world generally it was held that a married man could have sexual adventures as long as it did not involve a married woman (which would involve the rights of her husband).

Matt. 5:28 But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

But I say to you, that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully Almost always used of a married woman or wife (here probably wider meaning 'any woman').

has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Jesus intention is to prohibit not a natural sexual attraction but the deliberate harboring of desire for an *illicit* relationship. The seventh commandment is treated like the sixth; not only the act of adultery is wrong but the desire that causes it is condemned.

Matt. 5:29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

But if your right eye causes you to sin, If something causes you to sin. This is exaggeration for sake of emphasis.

tear it out and throw it from you; Not to be understood literally.

for it is better that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into Gehenna. Again we have exaggeration for emphasis.

Matt. 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts do not have this verse.

And if your right hand causes you to sin, Another example of exaggeration for emphasis.

cut it off and throw it from you; As with the previous example, not to be taken literally.

for it is better that one of your members might perish, than for your entire body be thrown into Gehenna. More exaggeration for emphasis. Self-mutilation is not to be taken literally. It indicates that the avoidance of temptation may involve drastic sacrifices which may include *severing relationships or the renunciation of favorites activities*. The alternative is the loss of the whole body (the complete person).

Jesus again deepens the Old Testament commandment by interpreting it to include what occurs in the heart prior to and as the foundation of the external act. Thus, again He shifts the attention from the external act to the internal thought. Disciples are called to a standard of conduct that includes even their realm of thinking.

Jesus' Views On Divorce (5:31-32)

Instead of agreeing with the liberal attitude that many Jews held, Jesus will limit the grounds for a divorce to unfaithfulness in the marriage vow.

Matt. 5:31 Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'

And it was said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, Those men who divorce their wives, the wives did not have power to divorce their husbands.

let him give to her a certificate of divorcement.' These words are based upon Deuteronomy 24:1-4. In other passages in this section Jesus is dealing with specific commands of God but people were never commanded to get

divorced. A woman was not permitted to divorce her husband, though she could petition the court and they would direct the husband to divorce her.

In Jesus' day there was the school of Shammai who took a hard line and allowed divorce for adultery. The school of Hillel was more liberal allowing divorce for a wide range of things including spoiling the man's dinner. Rabbi Akiba allowed divorce, "Even if he found another fairer." Against this background Jesus called people to appreciate the true meaning of marriage. We should bear in mind that He is laying down great principles that should guide conduct, He is not making laws or giving a precise list of occasions where divorce might take place.

Matt. 5:32 But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *everyone* some manuscripts read *whoever*. Some manuscripts read *everyone* instead of *whoever*.

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, The subject is now divorce.

except for the cause of marital unfaithfulness, This qualifies the otherwise absolute prohibition.

is making her commit adultery, Jesus regards the remarriage of the divorced woman as adultery both on her part and on the part of her husband. Notice the blame is put firm on the man, not the woman.

and whoever marries the divorced woman, This brings another person into the picture.

he is committing adultery. The Mosaic Law allowed divorce, making provision for the divorced woman by the certificate of divorce. Later in the gospel, Jesus will comment on the reason for this legislation (19:3-12). In the present passage Jesus introduces the new and shocking idea that even properly divorced people who marry a second time may be thought of as committing adultery. The Old Testament, though allowing divorce, does not regard those who remarry as committing adultery.

This new and dramatic way of speaking is directly related to the absolute prohibition of divorce by Jesus. Marriage was meant to establish a permanent relationship between a man and a woman, and divorce should *not* be considered an option for the disciples of the kingdom. As will appear in 19:3-12, the original idea for man and woman was one of permanent marriage. The fulfillment brought by the present existence of the kingdom demands a return of the disciples to that original standard. Divorce is therefore to be shunned. The ethics of the kingdom are of a high standard (5:48).

The point of speaking of remarriage as involving adultery is simply to emphasize the wrongness of divorce. The conclusion is drawn by some

interpreters that while divorce may be allowable for the Christian, on the basis of this passage remarriage is prohibited because it involves adultery. A divorce however, without the possibility of remarriage is, however, in the context of this discussion really only a separation and not a divorce. Moses allowed divorce and remarriage—it must be noted, without designating the remarried as adulterers—because of the hardness of the hearts of the people. Followers of Jesus, recipients of the Kingdom, are still not in this new era rid of hard hearts, divorce and remarriage will continue to occur among them, just as it did among the people of God in the Old Testament. We must forgive those who fail yet we must also strive after the ideal that Jesus gave us.

Jesus' Views On Oath's (5:33-37)

Jesus speaks out against second class oaths that avoid using the name of God.

Matt. 5:33 “Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’

Note on a variant reading: Two manuscripts do not have the phrase *to those of ancient times*.

“Again, you have heard that it has been said to those of ancient times, ‘You will not swear falsely,’ These two passages summarize the Old Testament teaching rather than quote it explicitly. Swear falsely can mean to break an oath.

but will keep the oaths that you have made to the Lord.’ The Old Testament emphasizes that oaths have a binding character (Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21-23; cf. Zechariah 8:7).

Matt. 5:34 But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God.

But I say to you do not swear at all, Though Jesus rejected oaths this ideal is not to be taken as a rigid rule, i.e. this does not refer to oaths in court where Jesus Himself responded to the High Priest when He was under oath (26:63,64), and by occasion oaths of the New Testament 2 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 1:20, cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:27; even God can use an oath (Hebrews 6:13-17).

either by heaven, for it is the throne of God Jesus rejected the use of second class oaths which avoid the name of God (and therefore are not binding). Firstly, they do not in fact exclude God, as heaven and earth and Jerusalem are inseparably linked with God and even your head is God's creation and under His control. Secondly, the oaths should be unnecessary. A simple yes or no will do (vs. 37). All our words are binding.

Matt. 5:35 or by the earth, because it is His footstool; or by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King.

or by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet, Earth is symbolically where the heavenly king places His feet.

or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. The oath of a binding character, and to swear by heaven, or anything else one might mention is more significant than it may initially sound.

Matt. 5:36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

Nor will you swear by your head, Another form of oath taking.

for you cannot make one hair white or black. All oath taking implicates God, is in effect to swear in His name, and thus all oath taking is to be understood as possessing an absolute character.

Matt. 5:37 But let your word ‘yes’ be ‘yes,’ and your ‘no’ be ‘no.’ Anything more than this is from the evil one.

Note on a variant reading: A couple of manuscripts (including Vaticanus) read Your word Yes will be yes. A few manuscripts have and after be Yes. A couple of manuscripts have *the* before *No*.

But let your, ‘Yes,’ be ‘Yes,’ your ‘No,’ ‘No;’ A sincere, “Yes,” and a sincere, “No” is all that we need.

for anything more than this is from the evil one In the ethics of the kingdom there is no need for taking oaths. Matthew refers to the evil one i.e. Satan or the devil (cf. 6:13;13:19,38) more than does any other evangelist or any other New Testament book except 1 John.

Although in the Old Testament practice of oath taking was encouraged, or at least allowed, as a means of strengthening one’s personal resolution to do something, as it evolved it apparently became a way by which some persons avoided responsibility. Jesus affirms the binding character of oaths and implicitly denies the subtle distinctions that some used to invalidate their oaths (Matthew 23:16-22). Yet at the same time, Jesus lifts the matter to a new level by denying the necessity of oaths altogether. The ethics to which Jesus calls His disciples are those of the kingdom and its perfection. A persons words should be relied upon without qualification and without the need of the further guarantee an oath might afford.

Oaths are rendered superfluous. With the dawn of a new era comes a wholly new standard of righteousness. The issue is nothing less than and nothing more than truthfulness.

Jesus’ Views On Retaliation (5:38-42)

Rather than retaliating against an attacker, Jesus urges pacifism.

Matt. 5:38 You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth’

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts do not have *and*.

“You have heard that it was said, This verse lacks the reference to “the ancients”

‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” is cited in Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; and Deuteronomy 19:21.

The principle of proportionate retribution was older and more recognized than the Mosaic law.

Matt. 5:39 But I tell you not to oppose an evil person. If someone slaps you on your right cheek, turn your other cheek to him as well.

Note on variant readings: Many manuscripts read *whoever will slap* instead of *whoever slaps*. Some manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) do not have *your*. Other manuscripts do not have *right*.

But I say to you, do not resist evil. Not the evil one (Satan) or an evil person is in view. As we learn from the context do not render evil for evil, that is the evil deed. What Jesus is opposing is the insistence on legitimate retribution. This statement of His would be shocking in light of the principle of justice defended by the Old Testament texts.

But whoever slaps you upon your right cheek, Since most people are right handed a slap on the right cheek means one with the back of the hand – not a closed fist. Even today in the East, a slap expresses the greatest possible contempt and extreme abuse. It was punished by a very heavy fine. This is Jesus’ first example of nonretaliation.

turn to him the other also. Vengeance is the Lords (Romans 12:19, 21; 2 Corinthians 11:20; and 1 Thessalonians 5:15, cf. Deuteronomy 32:35).

Matt. 5:40 If someone wants to sue you in order to take your shirt, let him have your coat too.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *to the one wishing* some manuscripts read *the one who wishes*. Some manuscripts have *robe* instead of *your robe*.

And to the one wishing to sue you and take your tunic, Those who have what they believe is a legal grievance against you.

give to him your robe as well. The principle is not the avoidance of lawsuits but an unselfish attitude towards one’s own rights and property. The second illustration refers to legal action (in a court). The result of which could be the loss of one’s tunic or inner garment. Jesus teaches not only that one should give up what one is sued for but that one should also

voluntarily give up the more essential outer garment, robe or cloak as well (Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:7 for Paul's similar attitude).

Matt. 5:41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *two* some manuscripts read *yet another two* while other manuscripts have *another*.

And whoever forces you to go one mile, This is a specific term for the Roman practice of commanding civilian labor in an occupied country to bear his load (see 27:32).

go with him two. One should not only go the required Roman mile but go an extra mile. Thus unjustifiable requests should be complied with and the response should exceed the request. Again the perspective of the kingdom of God is contrary to the perspective of the world.

Matt. 5:42 “Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”

Give to the one who asks you, We are to be unselfish.

and do not turn away the one wishing to Unselfishness extends to our own property.

borrow from you. This word is only found elsewhere in Luke 6:34,35.

Jesus' Views On Loving Our Enemies (5:43-48)

The mark of the Christian will be love. First, for one another (John 13:33,34) and then for our enemies.

Matt. 5:43 “You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.

You have heard that it has been said, What they know the Scripture says.

‘You will love your neighbor From Leviticus 19:18.

and hate your enemy.’ In the Old Testament “hate” often signifies “love less” or “not love” (compare Luke 14:26 with Matthew 10:37). Although here it may have same meaning as our word hate. See also Matthew 6:24; Romans 9:13; Genesis 29:30,31. The Old Testament and Judaism expected a greater love for the fellow-members of the people of God than for those outside.

Matt. 5:44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *pray on behalf of those who persecute you* some manuscripts read *bless those that curse you* others have *and do well to the ones hating you* while still others read *pray for those spitefully using you*.

But I say to you, love your enemies, In contrast to what others teach.

and pray on behalf of those who persecute you, Jesus rejects this distinction. Love is not just a sentimental feeling but the earnest desire for their good.

Matt. 5:45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; This is not teaching salvation by works.

for he causes his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, To love your enemies is crucial importance to the very identity of a disciple. Undiscriminating love will be the mark of the Christian. To participate in the kingdom relates the disciple to the Father in a unique way, and that unique relationship involves doing His will.

and sends rain upon the righteous and unrighteous. This represents a stylistic variation to the previous “evil and good.” These people are the enemies of God.

Matt. 5:46 If you love only those who love you, what good is that? Even the tax collectors do that much.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *the same thing* some manuscripts read *in this manner*. A few manuscripts read *this thing*.

For if you love the ones loving you, Returning love from others.

what reward do you have? What have you really done?

The tax gatherers do the same thing, do they not? The disciple must not be on the same level as others, he must do more.

Matt. 5:47 If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that

Note on variant readings: Two manuscripts do not have this verse. Many manuscripts read *friends* instead of *brothers*. In some manuscripts the reading is *tax collectors* instead of *Gentiles*.

And if you greet only your brothers, What is normally expected.

what are you doing more than others? Again the person is doing the minimal.

The Gentiles do the same thing, do they not? His behavior must be above that of the Gentiles and tax collectors.

Matt. 5:48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *just as* instead of *as*.

Therefore you are to be perfect, You is emphatic in Greek.

as your Father in heaven is perfect. This is an ideal stated for disciples. He is not speaking about sinless perfection or being without sin. The term is equivalent to the Hebrew word *tamim* which is used in the Old Testament about moral uprightness (Genesis 6:9;17:1; 2 Samuel 2:22:24-27). God's requirements go beyond the legal conformity. The word means more than moral perfection; it indicates a person's total life should be consistent to the will of God thus reflecting His character.

Summary to Chapter Five

The Sermon on the Mount is well-organized with clearly defined divisions. The exact way in which we interpret and apply its teachings has been the subject of continuing debate.

The best way seems to have it as the law for the kingdom age, which is still future, yet the principles are for the disciples in this age.

In the first section, (2-16), Jesus speaks of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven and illustrates their character and blessedness. He does this by giving a series of beatitudes or blessings for those who are citizens of the kingdom.

In the next part, (13-16), He describes their relationship to the world as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Both salt and light have the idea of penetration. As believers we are to penetrate into the dark, saltless world by being lights.

The righteousness of the kingdom is then set forth with the high standard of life demanded for those who follow Him (17-19). Jesus has come in fulfillment of the Old Testament Law and Prophets. He coming is to fulfill, not destroy.

Jesus, however, is not in agreement with the current traditions of the elders that were given equal status to the Old Testament teaching (20-48). As He cites the Old Testament and comments upon a number of precepts, He speaks with absolute authority. He points out that such things as adultery and murder have their origin in things such as lust and hate. These emotions and feelings will eventually lead to sin if they are not kept under control.

Consequently we are to love our enemies and pray for the ones who persecute us. This is in contrast of reacting the normal human way with hatred and a desire for revenge. It is God's responsibility to avenge His

The Gospel According To Matthew

children, our responsibility is to love our enemies and trust that God will rectify the situation.

The last verse of this chapter sums up Jesus' teaching on discipleship in one all- embracing demand. We are to be like our Father in heaven. Of course, this is impossible in our own fallen nature. We must trust the Holy Spirit to continue to change us so that we will become more Christ-like in our actions and our attitudes. This maturing process is something that occurs over our entire lifetime, with no shortcuts to true spirituality.

**Matthew
Chapter 6**

The Sermon on the Mount continues with Jesus speaking about true righteousness, prayer, fasting, wealth and worrying.

The Proper Way Of Giving (6:1-4)

Jesus now speaks of the correct way of practicing out righteous deeds. We are to do them privately to be seen by the Father, not publicly to be seen by men.

Matt. 6:1 Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before people, in order to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *acts of righteousness* many manuscripts read *almsgiving*. A few manuscripts have *gifts*.

Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness These are deeds consisting of righteousness.

before people, in order to be seen by them We are never to “show off” our spirituality to gain approval from people.

Otherwise you have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. God will not reward this type of behavior.

Matt. 6:2 Therefore when you do almsgiving, do not sound a trumpet before you, just as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they might be praised by others. Truly I say to you, that they have received their reward in full.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) have *Truly, truly*.

Therefore when you do almsgiving, These are merciful deeds.

do not sound a trumpet before you, This was a religious duty not an option in Judaism (cf. Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Psalm 112:9). We are to give generously but not conspicuously.

just as the hypocrites do This is a favorite term in Matthew. The term originally meant actor and the idea is similar here.

in the synagogues and in the streets, There is evidence that certain people made it a point to go their deeds in public.

that they might be praised by others. This was their purpose.

Truly I say to you, that they have received their reward in full. In doing your spiritual duties you are *not* performing in front of an audience! Hence Jesus is stressing sincerity of our actions.

Matt. 6:3 But you, when you are doing your almsgiving, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

But you, when you are doing your almsgiving, *You* is emphasized in Greek.

do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. In contrast to the hypocrites, do your almsgiving in secret.

Matt. 6:4 that your almsgiving may be done in secret; then your Father who sees in secret, will reward you.

Note on variant readings. Some manuscripts have the word *himself* after *your Father*. After *will reward you* some manuscripts have the Greek phrase translated *openly* or *in the open*.

that your almsgiving may be done in secret; We are to be just the opposite of hypocrites.

then your Father who sees in secret, We do it so only God can see our deeds.

will reward you. There is not an earned payment for our service, but a disproportionate return based on God's grace. This reward is not from men but from God. It is *His* reward we are working for. The stress here is on the source of the reward in comparison to the hypocrites.

Jesus On Prayer (6:5-15)

The Lord teaches His disciples how to pray and what to ask for.

Matt. 6:5 And when you pray, you will not be like the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they might be seen by others; truly I say to you, they have received their reward in full.

Note on variant readings: One Syriac manuscript does not have this verse. The majority of manuscripts have *you* in the singular not the plural (*you pray, you will not*). A great majority of the manuscripts have *that after to you*.

And when you pray, The subject now moves to prayer.

you will not be like the hypocrites; The structure is similar to verses 3 and 4 with the same key words.

for they love to pray standing in the synagogues They love to do this.

and in the corners of the streets, Those who strictly observed the afternoon hour of prayer could deliberately time his movements to bring him to the most public place at the appropriate time!

that they might be seen by others; truly I say to you, they have received their reward in full. Being viewed by men was their reward.

Matt. 6:6 But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father, the one who sees in the secret, will reward you.

Note on a variant reading: The same variant as verse four. After *will reward you* some manuscripts have the Greek phrase translated *openly* or *in the open*.

But you, when you pray, In contrast to the hypocrites

go into your inner room, The disciple is to pray in the inner room.

and when you have shut your door, We are to pray privately to God.

pray to your Father who is in secret; We are to pray in secret to the one who sees us in secret.

and your Father, the one who sees in the secret, will reward you. The reward comes from the One who sees us pray secretly..

Matt. 6:7 And when you pray, do not keep on using empty repetition, as the Gentiles, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *Gentiles* a couple of manuscripts (including *Vaticanus*) have *hypocrites*.

And when you pray, Now He will further expand on prayer

do not keep on using empty repetition, It is not repetition that He is warning against but rather *empty* repetition.

as the Gentiles, These verses are relevant to the Gentiles much more than to the hypocrites.

for they think they will be heard because of their many words. They attempt to manipulate God through their vain repeating of phrases. All of it is babbling.

Matt. 6:8 Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Vaticanus*, along with two other manuscripts, reads *God your Father*. Other manuscripts read *your Father in*

heaven. Instead of the reading *your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him*, two Latin manuscripts read *before you open your mouth*.

Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. Prayer is not for the purpose of manipulating God.

Matt. 6:9 Therefore, you yourselves pray in this manner: ‘Our Father, the one who is heaven, set apart your holy Name.

Therefore, you yourselves pray in this manner: ‘Our Father, the one who is heaven, The so-called “Lord’s prayer,” This same prayer occurs in a shorter form in Luke. It is a prayer for disciples who alone can call God “Father.” The real “Lord’s prayer is found in John 17.

set apart your holy Name. The relationship between *name* and *person* is much closer in Hebraic thought than for us today. The name of God is virtually indistinguishable from the person of God (cf. Malachi 1:6; Isaiah 29:23; Ezekiel 36:23; John 12:28; 17:6). Thus God is called apart to vindicate Himself.

Matt. 6:10 Let your kingdom come, let your will be done on earth, as in heaven.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts do not have the word *as*.

Let your kingdom come, Refers to the future rule of God and the consummation of His purposes in history (cf. Acts 1:6).

let your will be done We are to have the mind of God in prayer.

on earth, Let the things of earth reflect the things in heaven.

as in heaven. Jesus is contrasting the two worlds—the earthly and the heavenly.

Matt. 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.

Note on a variant reading: Because of the uncertain meaning of the word translated *daily* several variants have arisen. These include *perpetual*, *necessary*

Give us today This is our request to God.

our daily bread. The meaning of this word translated “daily bread” is uncertain. The possibilities include:

(1) Bread for the day in question, or daily. This is reminiscent of the daily provision of manna in the wilderness.

(2) Bread necessary for survival (cf. Proverbs 30:8)—a daily ration.

(3) Bread for the coming day.

Matt. 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven the ones who owe us.

Note on variant readings: The early Christian document *The Didache* (the teaching of the twelve) has *the debt* (singular) as opposed to *our debts* (plural). Origen, the early Church Father, has *the trespasses*. Many manuscripts read *as we forgive* while others read *as we have forgiven*.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven the ones who owe us. The concept of sin as a “debt owed to God” has an Aramaic background (in the rabbinical literature *Hoba*, is sin construed as a debt).

The Bible gives us many reasons why we should forgive others. They include:

1. Christ has provided the example for us of unlimited forgiveness (Luke 23:34; John 13:12-15; Ephesians 4:32; 5:1,2; Colossians 3:13). As He has forgiven us, so we should forgive others.
2. God commands us to forgive others. Vengeance is not our job, it belongs to Him (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19).
3. Jesus taught us that we cannot be forgiven unless we are willing to forgive others.
4. The person who has sinned needs our help for restoration. We need to love him and forgive him (Romans 13:8).
5. When we attempt to extract some type of revenge from people, we then exert our efforts into the work of the flesh, not the Spirit. Thus we are not being controlled by the Spirit as the Scripture commands (Ephesians 5:18).
6. Our lives should be spent looking after the needs of others, not our own needs (Philippians 2:2). God has promised to meet all our needs (Philippians 4:19). When we have been wronged, we need to trust God to deal with our situation and we should pray for that person who has sinned against us.
7. The Bible tells us to look forward, not behind (Philippians 2:13). The past should be kept in the past.
8. When we forgive others God will then grant us peace of mind and of heart. This peace passes all human understanding (Philippians 4:7,9).
9. God will be glorified when we forgive others for Christ’s sake. His glorification should be the aim of all of our conduct (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Matt. 6:13 And do not ever lead us into temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

Note on variant readings: The memorable phrase *for yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. amen* is found in many manuscripts. A few

manuscripts have *for yours is the kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. amen*. Two manuscripts simply read *amen* after *the evil one*.

And do not ever lead us into temptation, Does God lead believers into temptation?

but rescue us from the evil one. This can refer to evil in general or “the evil one” specifically the devil.

Matt. 6:14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Father in heaven will forgive you.

Note on variant reading: A few manuscripts do not have *for*. Some manuscripts read *your trespasses* after *will forgive you*.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, If for the sake of argument. Let’s assume that you do forgive men their trespasses.

your Father in heaven will forgive you. This is not teaching salvation by works.

Matt. 6:15 But if you don’t forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses.

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts have the phrase *their trespasses* after *If you don’t forgive men*.

But if you don’t forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses. We must have a heart to forgive and forget.

Jesus Teaches About Fasting (6:16-18)

Contrary to the hypocrites, believers are to fast so only God will know that they are fasting.

Matt. 6:16 Moreover, when you fast, do not put on a sad face as the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so they might appear to people fasting; truly I say to you, they have received their reward in full.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *as* many manuscripts read *just as*. Instead of *their faces* *Codex Vaticanus* reads *their own*. Before *they have* many manuscripts read *that*.

Moreover, when you fast, do not put on a sad face as the hypocrites, Fasting was an important element in Jewish religious life (i.e. Day of Atonement). Strict Pharisees fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12) and made sure others knew it.

for they disfigure their faces Literally “make invisible.” Making it unrecognizable by covering the head or smearing with ash and dirt.

so they might appear to people fasting; Done for the benefit of men, not God.

truly I say to you, they have received their reward in full. If something is done for the benefit of men then their reward will come from men.

Matt. 6:17 But you, when you fast, put oil your head, and wash your face,

But you, when you fast, Again the disciple will be contrasted to the hypocrite.

put oil your head, and wash your face, Do not look like you are fasting.

Matt. 6:18 so that you do not appear to people to be fasting, but to your Father the one who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Note on a variant reading. The same variant as verses four and six. After *will reward you* some manuscripts have the Greek phrase translated *openly* or *in the open*.

so that you do not appear to people to be fasting, The disciple who fasts should appear normal.

but to your Father the one who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Jesus assumes that fasting will continue among His disciples (see Acts 13:2,3; 14:23 for fasting in the early church). Fasting, however, is never commanded to the New Testament church.

The Definition Of Genuine Riches (6:19-21)

Jesus describes what real riches are. They are not something here on earth that can perish but in heaven where riches can never perish.

Matt. 6:19 Do not treasure for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

Do not treasure for yourselves treasures upon the earth, The disciples attitude toward material possessions

where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.. Earthly possessions can be stolen or destroyed. There is *no* permanent security for treasures here on the earth. Treasures in the ancient world were often buried under the house floors, as archaeologists have repeatedly discovered.

Matt. 6:20 But treasure for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy, and where thieves do not break in or steal.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *or steal* a few manuscripts read *and steal*.

But treasure for yourselves treasures in heaven, Contrast between heavenly and earthly reward.

where neither moth nor rust destroy, and where thieves do not break in or steal. There are permanent treasures in heaven.

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

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts do not have *your* before *treasure* and before *heart*. *Codex Vaticanus* along with a few Egyptian manuscripts do not have *also*.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. It is not so much the disciples wealth that Jesus is concerned with, but rather their loyalty.

Light Through The Eyes (6:22-24)

Jesus emphasizes that we are to let light in through our eyes, not darkness. A true disciple has no room for darkness.

Matt. 6:22 The light of the body is the eye. So if your eye is healthy, your entire body will be full of light.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts do not have *so*.

The light of the body is the eye. The eye is the window which lets light in.

So if your eye is healthy, your entire body will be full of light. This difficult saying reinforces what has previously been said. Jesus contrasts light and darkness.

Matt. 6:23 But if your eye is unhealthy, then your entire body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

But if your eye is unhealthy, then your entire body will be full of darkness.

If therefore the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! The “evil eye” of Near Eastern cultures is an eye that covets what belongs to another, a greedy eye.

Matt. 6:24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You are not able to serve God and mammon.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *No one* a few manuscripts read *no household servant*.

No one can serve two masters; This is a proverbial truth.

for either he will hate the one Hate is misleading since the Jewish idiom of loving and hating intends to express a matter of absolute versus partial commitment. The use of hate is clear from the passage such as Luke 14:26. This does not refer to hatred as we understand the word but is only an emphatic way of referring to the absolute commitment required in discipleship. Hate thus equal “love less than” as can be clearly seen from the parallel in Matthew 10:37. This idiom is already found in the Old Testament (compare Genesis 29:31,33 with 29:30; in Deuteronomy 21:15 the NSRV “disliked” is literally “hatred”).

and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one literally “to be a slave of.”

and despise the other. You are not able to serve God and mammon. Aramaic term for possessions. It is a neutral term. Possessions can be either good or evil depending upon how they are used.

The issue in these passages is not wealth primarily, but rather absolute and unqualified discipleship. Wealth is only the most obvious example of what can distract believers from following Jesus. It is only the most unique individuals who can possess a great deal of the world’s wealth without becoming enslaved to it. The real issue is where the heart lies. There is no absolute requirement here for poverty (as some have understood this passage). Anyone who is distracted from unqualified discipleship because of a covetous eye exists in deep darkness. The nature of discipleship is such as that it allows *no divided loyalties*. It is impossible to be a partially committed or part-time disciple.

The Futility Of Worry (6:25-34)

Jesus provides examples as to why the believer should not worry.

Matt. 6:25 Because of this I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or what you will drink,] or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing, is it not?

Note on a variant reading. The phrase *or what you will drink* is lacking in some manuscripts.

Because of this I say to you, do not worry about your life, We are not to worry about our existence.

what you will eat [or what you will drink,] or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing, is it not? The remainder of the chapter deals with anxiety. We should not be anxious for anything.

Matt. 6:26 Consider the birds of the heaven, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. You yourselves are more valuable than they are you not?

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Codex Sinaiticus*) have *the* before *barns*.

Consider the birds of the heaven, Jesus gives another simple example from nature.

that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. The birds are taken care of.

You yourselves are more valuable than they are you not? How much more valuable than birds are humans? We have been made in God's image.

Matt. 6:27 And who among you by worrying is able to add one single hour to his life?

And who among you by worrying is able to add one single hour to his life? Worrying does add any time to your life span. It even may shorten it.

Matt. 6:28 And why are you worrying concerning clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they do not labor or spin

And why are you worrying concerning clothing? The illustration is now about clothing.

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they do not labor or spin Jesus probably pointed to these flowers as He was giving this illustration.

Matt. 6:29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one of these.

yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one of these. Even Solomon did not have their covering

Matt. 6:30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which exists today and tomorrow it is cast into the oven, will he not much more for you—O ones of little faith?

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which exists today and tomorrow it is cast into the oven, will he not much more for you—O ones of little faith? God promises to take care of us.

Matt. 6:31 Therefore do not worry saying, 'What you will eat?' or 'What you will drink?' or 'What will we wear?'

Therefore do not worry saying, ‘What you will eat?’ or ‘What you will drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ These questions should not be asked by His disciples.

Matt. 6:32 For all these things the Gentiles are striving after. For your Father in heaven knows that you need of all these things.

all these things the Gentiles are striving after. The Gentiles were primarily concerned about material needs. Here the word is not so much a racial but religious distinction as in 5:47.

For your Father in heaven knows that you need of all these things. God knows all our needs.

Matt. 6:33 But be seeking first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given unto you as well

Note on a variant reading. Some manuscripts do not have the phrase *of God*. Clement, the early church Father, has *kingdom of heaven*.

But be seeking first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, We are to continually seek the things of the kingdom of God.

and all these things will be given unto you as well. Climax of vs. 25 ff. Instead of emphasizing the negative Jesus sets out the positive attitude required of disciples. Without this attitude disciples will be subject to anxiety.

Matt. 6:34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. God will deal with trouble when the time comes (James 4:13-15).

This passage, like the preceding one, stresses the importance of undistracted discipleship. The key to avoiding anxiety is to make the kingdom “one’s priority.” The disciples have a heavenly Father who knows their ongoing needs and who will supply them. If He takes care of His creation, He will surely take care of those who participate in His kingdom.

This passage does not mean that food, drink, clothing, and other such necessities will come to the disciples automatically without work or foresight. It address only the problem of anxiety about these things. Anxiety and worry need not govern the disciple who has known the grace of the kingdom.

Summary to Chapter 6

Chapter six continues the Sermon on the Mount by stressing true devotion to God is something that is done inwardly, not merely on the outside.

The Gospel According To Matthew

In the first section, (1-18), Jesus stresses secretly giving to God, praying to God, and fasting before God so that He is the only One who knows we are doing it. Our secret devotion will be rewarded by God publicly. Therefore we are not to seek the admiration and attention of others. Therefore Jesus teaches us how to give, how to pray and how to fast.

Furthermore, unlimited trust in God is incompatible with worry about riches or any of our basic daily needs as the next section, (19-34), emphasizes. God has promised to take care of His own. We are more valuable than the grass or the birds and yet God magnificently takes care of them. So why do we worry?

**Matthew
Chapter 7**

The Sermon on the Mount continues with Jesus teaching His disciples how to treat others. He concludes with the two foundations that we have the option of building upon.

Jesus On Judging Others (7:1-6)

The Lord stresses that instead of looking at the faults of others, we should first examine our own weaknesses.

Matt. 7:1 Do not judge, so that you too will not be judged.

Do no judge, The word judge (Greek *krino*) often carries the idea of condemn as here. The passage is concerned with fault finding. It should not be taken as a prohibition of all judging or discerning of right and wrong since Matthew records Jesus' teachings that we should make such judgments (vs. 6, see also 7:15-20; 10:11-15; 16:6,12; 18:17,18).

so that you too will not be judged. The parable of unforgiving debtor (18:23-35) illustrates the point clearly.

Matt. 7:2 By the same standard you are judging others, you will be judged, and by the same measure you are measuring others, it will be measured to you.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *measured* some manuscripts read *measured back*.

By the same standard you are judging others, you will be judged, and by the same measure you are measuring others, it will be measured to you. This proverbial saying occurs in Mark 4:24 in a different sense, with reference to care in receiving Jesus' teaching, and in Luke 6:38 with reference probably to generosity in giving. It occurs commonly in Jewish literature to indicate divine retribution.

Matt. 7:3 And why do you see the speck that is in the eye of your brother, but you do not perceive the plank that is in your own eye?

And why do you see the speck This illustration is drawn from the carpenters workshop and shows the hypocrisy of criticizing others. A "speck" is a tiny splinter of wood or straw; word used in secular Greek metaphorically of something minute.

that is in the eye of your brother, This indicates that it is primarily the Christian community.

but you do not perceive the plank that is in your own eye? The obvious plank is obvious to all except the person that has it.

Matt. 7:4 Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, there is plank that is in your own eye?

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *can you say* some manuscripts read *are you saying*.

Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, there is plank that is in your own eye?’
Judgments of faults is to begin with oneself.

Matt. 7:5 Hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck from the eye of your brother.

Hypocrite, Matthew’s favorite term makes this point emphatic.

first take the plank out of your own eye, First things first.

and then you will see clearly to take out the speck from the eye of your brother. This passage concerns relationships in the community of faith and may be regarded as one expression of the ethic of love that is a summary of the law and the prophets. Although disciples cannot avoid making judgments (18:15-18), their judgments *are to be charitable*. The same standard of judgment we apply to others will in turn be applied to us. Hypocrites ignore the significant failures in their own lives and become preoccupied with the failures of others.

Matt. 7:6 Do not give what is holy to the dogs, nor throw your pearls before the pigs, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *they trample* some manuscripts read *they may trample*.

Do not give what is holy This tough saying stands alone, but qualifies the prohibition of judgment. It probably refers to consecrated food that was to be eaten only by priests and their families (Exodus 29:33,34; Leviticus 22:10-16; Numbers 18:8-19).

to the dogs, These were unclean animals to be fed with unclean food (Exodus 22:31).

nor throw your pearls before the pigs, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. It would be equally unthinkable to throw something as valuable as pearls before swine (cf 2 Peter 2:22 for a similar contemptuous linking of dogs and pigs).

The Generosity of God (7:7-11)

God wants to bless His people, Jesus tell us. Therefore we must present to Him our needs.

Matt. 7:7 Ask, and it will be given to you, seek and you will find; knock and it will be open to you.

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Vaticanus* reads *it is being opened*.

Ask, and it will be given to you, The exhortation is now to persistent prayer.

seek and you will find; The verbs, in the present tense in Greek, indicate persistent continuous prayer.

knock and it will be open to you. There are three commands in this verse. We are, however, not told what to request, who it is that seeks, or that for which the person knocks.

Matt. 7:8 For everyone that asks will receive, and he who is seeking will find, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

For everyone that asks will receive, Those who receive the kingdom brought by Jesus.

and he who is seeking will find, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Note that all of the promises are in the future tense.

Matt. 7:9 Or what man is there among you, when his son will ask for bread, he will not give him a stone will he?

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Vaticanus* along with a few other manuscripts do not have *is there*.

Or what man is there among you, when his son will ask for bread, he will not give him a stone will he? The reason for confidence is consideration of Fatherhood. A human father will not meet his son's request for food with useless or harmful substitutes.

Matt. 7:10 if he will ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?

if he will ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? The requests are not for the miraculous, but rather the necessities of life.

Matt. 7:11 Therefore, if you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give good things to the ones asking him.

Therefore, if you being evil, This is the same word for evil as 6:13. It is a strong word assuming man's sinfulness.

know how to give good gifts to your children, Even evil fathers know how to do the best for their children.

how much more will your father in heaven If human fathers provide for their children, how much more will our Heavenly Father.

give good things Luke tells us more specifically this is the Holy Spirit (11:13).

to the ones asking him. The believers are the ones who ask.

The Golden Rule (7:12)

In one verse, Jesus sums up how we are to treat others.

Matt. 7:12 Therefore, all things whatsoever you wish that people do to you, in the same manner you yourselves also do to them; this is the Law and the Prophets.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) do not have *therefore*.

Therefore, all things whatsoever you wish that people do to you, in the same manner you yourselves also do to them; this is the Law and the Prophets. The golden rule.

The Emperor Alexander Severus reputedly had it written in gold on his wall—not a bad example to follow!) It sums up the law and the prophets.

It is from this saying and that of 22:37-40 that love became the dominant and summarizing theme of the Christian ethic. To act in this manner, in constant deeds of love, is to bring expression that to which the law and the prophets pointed. That is, a world where only good is done to others, the return to paradise of the Garden of Eden. To do good to others is to mirror the activities of the Father (7:11) which finds its supreme fulfillment brought by the Son. No other teaching is so readily identified with Jesus; no other teaching is so central to the righteousness of the kingdom and the practice of discipleship.

The Narrow Gate And The Wide Gate (7:13-14)

There are two roads from which to choose, the wide road to destruction or the Lord's narrow highway to life.

Matt. 7:13 Enter in through the narrow gate. Because wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads unto destruction, and there are many who enter in through it.

Note on a variant reading. Some manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) do not have the words *the gate*. *Codex Sinaiticus*, and the church Father Clement, do not have the word translated *there are*.

Enter in through the narrow gate. Because wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads unto destruction, and there are many who enter in through it. Warnings against false discipleship.

Matt. 7:14 How straight is the gate, and narrow is the road that leads to life, and there are few that find it.

Note on a variant reading. Some manuscripts read *because* instead of *how*.

How straight is the gate, and narrow is the road that leads to life, Life is eternal life and is parallel into entering into the kingdom of heaven.

and there are few that find it. This does not *necessarily* mean a small amount, but rather not everyone will go in. There is no universalism (the doctrine that everyone will eventually end up in heaven) in the teaching of Jesus (see John 10:9).

Good And Bad Fruit (7:15-23)

Jesus explains that the true believers will be distinguished from the false believers by their fruit.

Matt. 7:15 Beware of the false prophets, who comes to you in sheep's clothing, but inside they are ravenous wolves.

Beware of the false prophets, False prophets offer an alternative to Jesus' way of discipleship.

who comes to you in sheep's clothing, but inside they are ravenous wolves. Despite their outward profession and appearance these people are mortal enemies of the gospel

Matt. 7:16 You will recognize them from their fruits. People do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they?

You will recognize them from their fruits. There are two types of fruit (doctrine and behavior). Profession of discipleship is not enough.

People do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they? An obvious example from nature.

Matt. 7:17 In this manner, every good tree makes good fruit, and the rotten tree makes bad fruit.

In this manner, every good tree makes good fruit, and the rotten tree makes bad fruit. This is a maxim or proverbial saying.

Matt. 7:18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *produce* Codex Vaticanus and a few Latin manuscripts read *bear*.

A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree The word is also used in an ethical sense in the New Testament (Ephesians 4:29, NRSV translates it “evil”).

produce good fruit. This verse stresses that it is contrary to nature for a good tree to produce bad fruit.

Matt. 7:19 Every tree not making good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *therefore* before *every*.

Every tree not making good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. This is the common metaphor for future judgment already encountered in Matthew (3:10,12; cf. 13:40,42,50; 18:8,9; 25:41; Luke 13:6-9, John 15:6).

Matt. 7:20 Indeed, from their fruits you will recognize them.

Indeed, from their fruits you will recognize them. We find the same phrase as vs. 16. As the sermon draws to a close, we are presented with a stern warning against hypocrisy and hypocrites (although neither of these words are used). Some people pretend to be something they really are not. These false prophets as they are called here, can undermine the true believers if they are followed. The ultimate test of truth is what these people *do*, not what they *say*.

Matt. 7:21 Not everyone saying to me, ‘Lord Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven; but only the one doing the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Note on a variant reading: After the verse some manuscripts have *he himself* (or *this one*) *will enter the kingdom of heaven*.

Not everyone saying to me, ‘Lord Lord,’ While the word translated “Lord” in the gospels is often no more than a polite form of address (sir), in Matthew it is generally used in contexts which indicate a deeper and more religious meaning.

will enter into the kingdom of heaven; but only the one doing the will of My Father who is in heaven. Not the hearers but the doers of the Word.

Matt. 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?’

Note on variant readings: After *Lord, Lord* two manuscripts read *Did we not eat and drink in Your name?* After *demons* *Codex Sinaiticus* has *many*.

Many will say to me in that day, The Day of Judgment.

‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, Prophecy does not mean simply, nor even primarily, of predicting the future, although that can be included (cf. Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11). It has the idea of the proclamation of truth in the broadest sense. In Matthew both John the Baptist (11:9; 21:26) and Jesus (14:5; 21:11, 46 and a self-designation in 13:57) are described as prophets.

and in your name drive out demons, In Jesus’ name refers to in Jesus authority.

and in your name perform many miracles?’ Charismatic activities done apart from righteousness, have no self-contained importance, and are in themselves insufficient for entry into the kingdom of heaven.

The question arises as to how they could have driven out demons and performed miracles in Jesus’ authority and still not have been Christians. There are several possible answers:

1. The exorcism of demons and miracles did not occur. What we have is merely the *claim* of these individuals that they did them, not the acknowledgment of their deeds.
2. These were false signs, not genuine supernatural deeds. These individuals could have involved some sort of sleight of hand work or deception.
3. Some feel these signs were not necessarily false. Keener writes:

The miracles Jesus mentions are not necessarily false; it is possible to prophesy by the Spirit’s inspiration and yet be disobedient to God and unsaved (1 Sam 19:20-24; Keener, *Background*, p. 65).

Matt. 7:23 And then I will confess to them, that at no time have I known you. Depart from me the ones who work the lawlessness!

Note on a variant reading: After *the ones* some manuscripts have *all*.

And then I will confess to them, that at no time have I known you. Depart from me the ones who work the lawlessness! Notice that Jesus presents Himself as the judge. Probably no passage in the New Testament expresses more concisely and more sharply that the essence of discipleship, and hence participation in the kingdom, is found not in words, nor in religiosity, nor even in the performance of spectacular deeds in the name of Jesus, but only in the manifestation of true righteousness. That is doing the will of the Father as now interpreted through the teaching of Jesus. Relationship with Jesus is impossible apart from doing the will of God. Neither good, important words (Lord, Lord) nor good, random deeds of mercy (e.g. driving out demons) can substitute for the full picture of righteousness that Jesus gives in the sermon. Religion can never take the place of actual obedience to the teaching of Jesus. At the same time, the larger framework of grace should not be forgotten, nor the reality of forgiveness available to the disciples (cf. 6:12). The seriousness of the

ethical demand upon the disciples does not cancel out the priority or significance of grace manifested in Jesus and the kingdom.

The Wise And The Foolish Builders (7:24-27)

There are only two foundations on which to build upon—the slippery sand or Jesus the rock.

Matt. 7:24 Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine, and is doing them, he will be compared to a wise man who built his house upon the rock.

Note on variant readings: *These* is not found in some manuscripts. Some manuscripts read *I will compare him* rather than *will be compared*.

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine, and is doing them, he will be compared to a wise man who built his house upon the rock. The well-known parable of the two builders closes the Sermon on the Mount.

Matt. 7:25 And the rain came down, and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.

And the rain came down, and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. A house built on a firm foundation will stand.

Matt. 7:26 And everyone who hears these words of mine, and is not doing them, he will be compared to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *everyone who hears* a few manuscripts read *whoever is hearing*.

And everyone who hears these words of mine and is not doing them he will be compared to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. The wrong foundation.

Matt. 7:27 And the rain came down, and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and the fall of it was great.

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Sinaiticus* does not have the phrase *the wind blew and*. After *great* some manuscripts have *exceedingly*.

And the rain came down, and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and the fall of it was great. The sandy foundation will not stand.

THE AMAZEMENT OF THE CROWDS (7:28,29)

The crowds were astounded by Jesus' teaching.

Matt. 7:28 And it came about when Jesus finished these words, the crowds were amazed at his teaching.

And it came about when Jesus finished these words, the crowds were amazed at his teaching. His teaching bewildered them.

Matt. 7:29 For he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Note on variant reading: Many manuscripts do not have *their*. Some manuscripts have *and the Pharisees*.

For he was teaching them as one having authority, The teaching of Jesus was characterized by authority.

and not as their scribes. The crowd was astonished at the teachings of Jesus. The emphasis is that Jesus taught with authority, not as their scribes. Obviously it is to emphasize to the Jewish Christians that Jesus, not the rabbinical authorities, is the one who speaks with authority.

The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount was radical both in content and in the unique authority that undergirded its forthright, confident delivery. Matthew will not miss the opportunity here at the end of a masterful distillation of the teaching of Jesus to call his readers' attention to the supreme authority of the Teacher. Jesus is not one among other Rabbi's; His authority centers not on the tradition of the Fathers, nor even the Law, but somehow, mysteriously and remarkably, it centers in Himself.

As the final and authoritative exposition of the meaning of the righteousness of the Law, this teaching has incomparable authority that can be accounted for by only one fact: the unique person of Jesus, the one teacher, the one master, the Christ (23:8-10). Only such personal authority can support the radical and surprising teaching and its exclusive claims (cf. John 7:46).

Summary to Chapter Seven

Chapter seven concludes the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus tells us that the essence of our righteous conduct is the golden rule (vs. 12), "Do unto others and we would have them do unto us." Therefore, we are not to judge others in a condemning way (1-6). Rather we are to look into our own heart and see our own faults.

Next Jesus discusses God's generosity (7-11) with examples from everyday life. If even the unbelieving fathers know how to take care of their own children, how much more will the heavenly Father?

He concludes the Sermon by stressing the two roads a person can take, and the two foundations one can build upon.

The Gospel According To Matthew

When He finished the crowd was amazed at His magnificent teaching for Jesus spoke to them as One having authority. He could do this because He was the authority.

**Matthew
Chapter 8**

After delivering the magnificent Sermon on the Mount Jesus now demonstrates that His authority is not limited to His words. His mighty words will be backed up with mighty deeds. In the next two chapters, Matthew will chronicle ten specific miracles of Jesus. These signs will demonstrate His authority over every conceivable area in which He could exercise His authority: sickness, the world of nature, the world of the supernatural, and authority over life and death. The conclusion is that Jesus is Lord of all!

The Healing Of The Leper (8:1-4)

Matthew moves immediately from the Sermon and its effect to the first specific healing narrative of the Gospel. The Messiah comes down the mountain after delivering His magnificent sermon and then puts it into practice by healing the most outcast of the nation—a leper.

There is no specific setting or location for this story. Matthew does not record the sequel to the healing of the leper as does Mark (1:45) which tells about the man's failure to keep silent about his healing and as a result Jesus was no longer able to be seen in public because of the crowds wanting to be healed.

This is the first of ten specific miracles in chapters 8-9 (a summary of earlier miracles of Jesus had been given in 4:23-25). It is no accident that His first healing miracle concerns a Jew and not a Gentile because the priority of His mission is to Israel (10:5,6; 15:24).

Matt. 8:1 And when he had come down from the mountain, large crowds followed him.

And when he had come down from the mountain, The Sermon is now over.

large crowds followed him. Those already referred to in 4:25. The majority followed more out of curiosity rather than belief

Matt. 8:2 And behold, a leper came and knelt before him saying, “Lord, if you wish, you are able to make me clean.”

And behold, Matthew's favorite word to tell us something important is about to happen.

a leper came No disease was more dreaded in the ancient world than leprosy. The person who contacted it was considered as good as dead. These living dead were thought to be under God's judgment (2 Chronicles 26:20).

knelt before him Though some translations have “worship” it may be too strong a term for this particular example. It was obviously an act of great respect and homage.

saying, “Lord, if you wish, Note that there is no demand to be healed, only a request.

you are able to make me clean.” The leper was confessing that Jesus was the Messiah but he not necessarily confessing belief in His deity.

He had probably heard of or seen Jesus’ other miracles so he believed Jesus could cure his leprosy. According to 11:5 the curing of leprosy could be expected from the Messiah.

Matt. 8:3 And stretching forth his hand he touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *He touched* many manuscripts have *Jesus touched*. *Codex Sinaiticus* does not have *immediately*.

And stretching forth his hand he touched him, Though He could have cured the leper by means of His spoken word, Jesus chooses to touch him. This act violated the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 5:3) about touching the unclean. However when Jesus touched him he was not unclean anymore! While others would run from one of these untouchable lepers Jesus made a point to reach out His hand and touch him. Alfred Plummer comments upon why Jesus touched the leper,

Perhaps the touch was also necessary for the sake of the millions who were to read of this cleansing. No moral pollution can be so great as to make Christ shrink from contact with a sinner, who comes to Him with a desire to be freed from his plague, and with the belief that he has the power to free him (Plummer, p. 123).

saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.”). Jesus responds by saying that He is willing.

And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Instantaneous healing. Matthew repeats the key word “make clean” three times in verses 2-3.

Matt. 8:4 And Jesus said to him, “See, that you do not tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

Note on a variant readings A couple of manuscripts read *your gift*.

And Jesus said to him, “See, that you do not tell anyone, Jesus desires to avoid inflaming the popular but mistaken opinion that the Messiah was going to set up an immediate political Kingdom. Matthew, however, does not say the crowds witnessed the event, and he records no reaction of the crowd.

but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, Obey the Mosaic Law.

as a testimony to them.” This has been interpreted in several ways.

1. As a witness to the priests about Jesus faithfulness to the Law.
2. As a witness against the priests that Jesus was the Messiah.
3. Receive a testimony concerning his cleanness for them (i.e. the people). Thus the people would certify his cure. The man was to go to the priests and make an offering not because he needed cleansing but so that he could gain entry back into society as fully clean and restored.

The special authority of Jesus, which His disciples just heard about in the Sermon on the Mount, can now be seen in His exceptional deeds.

In addition, the leper is symbolic of fallen humanity. Sin leaves its victims in a miserable condition—helpless, hopeless, and in despair. Like fallen humanity, the cursed leper has no hope until he encounters the One who makes all things new.

The Healing Of The Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)

The second specific miracle concerns a Gentile and his servant. Jesus shows that He has power to heal over a distance. He is not only Lord of the incurable disease, but distance is no problem for His healing power.

Matt. 8:5 When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him

Note on variant readings: Instead of *When He had entered Capernaum* two manuscripts read *and after these things*. Two other manuscripts read *and after these things He entered into Capernaum*. A couple of manuscripts read *Jesus* instead of *He*.

When he had entered Capernaum This city was near the border and on a major trade route so it probably had a contingent of Roman soldiers. This is the only miracle of Matthew that Mark does not record.

a centurion came to him, He was an officer in charge of a company of troops (originally 100 in number). He was a Gentile, either a Syrian or a Roman.

appealing to him The need was imminent.

Matt. 8:6 and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering great pain.”

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) do not have the word *Lord*.

and saying, “Lord, Like the leper in verse two the address meant more than “Sir” but less than the divine name Yahweh.

my servant It is probably the best way to understand the Greek word as “son” rather than as “servant” or “slave” although the latter may not be impossible. If he was a servant and not a son, he was a servant who was very close to his master. This was not uncommon in the ancient world.

is lying at home paralyzed, suffering great pain.” The nature of the illness is left vague. Although there is no reference to it being life threatening, it certainly was a desperate case.

Matt. 8:7 And he said to him, “I myself will come and heal him.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the word *And* before *He*. Instead of *He said* many manuscripts read *Jesus said*. *Codex Sinaiticus* has the words *follow Me* before *I Myself*.

And he said to him, “I myself will come and heal him.” The unusual way this sentence is formed has caused many to speculate that it should be understood as a question. “Will I come and heal him?” The question would express surprise that a Gentile would request a Jew to go to his home. However, this is not the case because Jesus responds immediately and positively.

Matt. 8:8 But the centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof, but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed.”

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts do not have the words *my servant*.

But the centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy This shows a sensitivity to Jewish customs that a Jew is not to enter the house of an unclean Gentile (Acts 10:28 ff.).

that you should come under my roof, The *my* is emphatic in Greek.

but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed.” The centurion had faith in the authority of Jesus based on his concept of authority elaborated in the following verse.

Matt. 8:9 For I myself, am also a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another one, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*) have *ordering under authority*.

For I myself, am also a man under authority, To be under authority means to have been granted authority by superiors.

having soldiers under me. He is a man who is in command of others.

And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, He in turn exercised authority over others.

and to another one, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” The emphasis is on the authority the centurion held over his troops. He considered this as analogous to the authority of Jesus. As the orders of the centurion must be obeyed, whatever they may be, so it is the case with the orders of Jesus.

Matt. 8:10 Now when Jesus heard this, he marveled, and said to the ones following, “Truly, I say to you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.

Note on a variant reading. Many manuscripts have *neither in Israel I have found such faith* (see Luke 7:9) rather than *with no one in Israel I have not found such faith*.

Now when Jesus heard this, he marveled, Jesus is amazed at his profound faith. See also the acclaim at the Gentile woman’s faith in 15:28. This is the only Biblical example of Jesus marveling at someone’s faith. He marveled at the unbelief of the people (Mark 6:6).

and said to the ones following, the crowd, not just the disciples.

“Truly, I say to you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. *No one* is emphatic in Greek. This statement not only criticizes the slowness of the Jews to believe but also the possibility of Gentiles having genuine faith.

This is the first introduction of the word *faith* in Matthew. This theme will be repeated often (9:2,22, 29; 15:28; 17:20; 21:21; 23:23).

Matt. 8:11 But I say to you, that many will come from the east and from the west, and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

But I say to you, that many will come from the east and from the west, Refers to Gentiles who are being called from the ends of the earth.

and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. Until this point the Messianic banquet had been considered just a Jewish affair.

Matt. 8:12 But the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out, into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) read *they will come out* instead of *they will be thrown out*.

But the sons of the kingdom This refers to those who belong to the kingdom or the covenant. NRSV “heirs” and NIV “subjects.” The true sons of the kingdom are those who respond to the proclamation of Jesus.

will be thrown out, into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” The others are sent to judgment. Outer darkness is contrasted to the brilliantly illuminated banquet hall. This is how Matthew describes future judgment (13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).

Matt. 8:13 And Jesus said to the centurion, “Go; let it be done to you as you have believed.” And his servant was healed in that hour.

Note on variant readings: Many manuscripts have *even* before *as*. A few manuscripts, including *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*, do not have *his*. Some manuscripts have *from that hour*. Instead of *hour* some manuscripts read *day*. A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) have at the end of the verse *and the centurion returned to his house and in the same hour found his servant well*.

And Jesus said to the centurion, “Go; let it be done to you as you have believed.” The servant will be healed because of the faith of the centurion.

And his servant was healed in that hour. This is Jesus healing at a distance by His mere spoken Word. Another incredible miracle showing His sovereign authority. Healing at a distance happens only to Gentiles (cf. 15:21-28).

Simon Peter’s Mother-in-Law Is Healed (8:14-15)

The third specific healing miracle concerns another disenfranchised person—a woman.

Jesus heals the mother-in-law of Simon Peter as she lay sick with a fever.

Matt. 8:14 And when Jesus came into Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever.

And when Jesus came into Peter’s house, Since the extended family usually lived together that the mother of Peter’s wife would be there is not something out of the ordinary.

he saw his mother-in-law That Peter was married is also attested in 1 Corinthians 9:5.

lying in bed with a fever. In the ancient world *fever* was a disease rather than something accompanying other diseases. Some speculate that it was malaria.

Matt. 8:15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose up and began to minister to him.

Note on variant readings: A few manuscripts read *immediately* before *the fever*. Some manuscripts have *to them* instead of *to Him*.

And he touched her hand, As with the curing of the leper, Jesus touched His patient (cf. also 9:29, 20:34). In this case Jesus healed without being asked.

and the fever left her, Another on the spot healing

and she rose up and began to minister to him. The fact that she got up immediately shows that the healing was genuine. She ministered to Him in grateful response to what He had done for her which is a fundamental aspect of discipleship. The third of the three initial healing stories represent another of the disenfranchised: a woman.

The Healing Of Many People (8:16-17)

Jesus continues His healing mission by curing many people with various illnesses.

Matt. 8:16 And when it became evening, they brought to him many who were demon-possessed; and He drove out all the spirits with a word, and healed all the ones who were sick.

And when it became evening, They were possibly waiting for the end of the Sabbath.

they brought to him many who were demon-possessed; No mention is made of other sicknesses but they are referred to in the statement following. It was not easy to draw the line between demon possession and other illnesses. Matthew records five specific cases of exorcism (8:28-34; 9:32-34; 12:22; 15:22-28; and 17:18).

and He drove out all the spirits with a word, The mere spoken word of Jesus was sufficient to exorcise the demons.

and healed all the ones who were sick. There was no illness that Jesus could not heal.

Matt. 8:17 So that it might be fulfilled that which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, “He himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases.”

So that it might be fulfilled that which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, Another fulfillment saying of Matthew.

saying, “He himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases.” No important distinction should be made between infirmities and diseases. Does this mean physical healing is included in Christ’s atonement for us? Should we expect not only forgiveness of our sins but also physical wellness when we trust Christ? See our discussion at the end of this chapter.

The Cost Of Discipleship (8:18-22)

As Jesus is about to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, two would-be disciples come to Him and offer themselves as followers. Jesus reveals the true meaning of discipleship to these individuals.

Matt. 8:18 Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he commanded to go over to the other side.

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts have some word modifying *crowd* such as *large* or *great*.

Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, This is a transitional verse. Jesus is apparently beleaguered by the crowd.

He commanded to go over to the other side. Jesus decides to escape the deserted area by the sea.

Matt. 8:19 Then a scribe came to him and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.”

Then a scribe came to him and said, The scribe was a professional scholar in the Law. He was not a disciple but wished to become one.

“Teacher The address ‘Teacher’ is not necessarily to be taken negatively compared with the leper and centurion who addressed him as Lord. When used by the Pharisees it refers to a deficient understanding of the character of Jesus (9:11; 12:38; 22:16, 24, 36).

I will follow after you wherever you go.” Follow after in the sense of a disciple. *Follow* and *go* are key words in the vocabulary of a disciple. Discipleship is more than just the willingness to accompany someone or to listen and learn from them. It is to live the same lifestyle. This scribe represented the normal Jewish practice of choosing his teacher while in the gospels it is Jesus who consistently chooses His own disciples.

Matt. 8:20 And Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

And Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” As He was accustomed, Jesus uses the ordinary things of nature to make His point. To be a disciple of Jesus means an urgent, wandering, and homeless ministry. The homelessness of the apostles is stressed later (1 Corinthians 4:11). Though Jesus used Capernaum as His headquarters His life was anything but settled.

Matt. 8:21 But another one of [his] disciples said to him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.”

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts do not have *His* before *disciples*.

But another one of [his] disciples said to him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” This question comes from a sincere disciple who was not one of the twelve but was in a larger circle of sincere disciples. His request seems to be reasonable. The Law requires to honor ones father and mother. In later Jewish tradition the burial of the dead superseded any religious duty.

Some attempt to find the phrase meaning “Let me look after him until he dies” meaning, “I’ll follow you eventually.”

Matt. 8:22 Jesus said to him, “You follow me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *He said* instead of *Jesus said*.

Jesus said to him, “You follow me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.” Jesus did not allow for *any* delay in following Him. That business can take care of itself. The call to discipleship with Jesus was immediate. This account is about disciples and discipleship, it is an all or nothing matter. At the time of Jesus, it would have been be considered dishonoring to follow Jesus rather than burying one’s father. The Apocryphal book of Tobit reads:

Then he called his son Tobias, and when he came to him he said, “My son, when I die, give me a proper burial. Honor your mother and do not abandon her all the days of her life. Do whatever pleases her, and do not grieve her in anything. Remember her, my son, because she faced many dangers for you while you were in her womb. And when she dies, bury her beside me in the same grave (Tobit 4:3-4).

There is also the possibility the man was just asking for more time. Burial customs in the first century may have involved the bones being reburied a year after the initial burial. The flesh would have rotted away at that point. The son would then place the bones of his father in a special box to be set into the wall of the tomb. If this is the case, Jesus could well be rebuking the man for wanting to wait around for as much as a year before making a commitment to follow him.

The Calming Of The Storm At Sea (8:23-27)

The fourth specific miracle recorded by Matthew concerns the calming of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. By this, Jesus demonstrates that He is Lord over nature.

Matt. 8:23 And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed after him.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *the* before *boat*.

And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed after him. The disciples are not quite yet the twelve (cf. 9:9, 10:2 where the full twelve are first mentioned by Matthew).

Matt. 8:24 And behold, a great storm arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered by the waves, but he himself was sleeping.

And behold, Attention!

a great storm arose in the sea, Literally “shaking” or “earthquake.” Earthquakes are key points for Matthew (27:51-54; 28:2).

so that the boat was covered by the waves, Clearly a life-threatening situation.

but he himself was sleeping. The One who has no place to lay His head is at home everywhere apparently untroubled by normal anxieties.

Matt. 8:25 And they came and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!”

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *the disciples* before *came*. Other manuscripts have *His disciples*. Some manuscripts do not have *us*.

And they came and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” Jesus needed to be awakened from His sleep. Immediate help is needed. It is difficult to know whether the Greek word here should be translated as “men” or “people” (in a generic sense) here. At issue is whether (1) only the Twelve were with Jesus in the boat, as opposed to other disciples (cf. v. 23), and (2) whether any of those other disciples would have been women. The issue is complicated further by the parallel in Mark (4:35-41), where we are told (4:36) that other boats accompanied them on this journey.

Matt. 8:26 And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, ones of little faith?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became completely calm.

And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, ones of little faith?” Why aren’t they trusting in their Lord?

Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became completely calm. Same language as used in exorcisms. Jesus rebukes their unbelief. Jesus is master over the world of nature.

Matt. 8:27 And the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obeys him?”

And the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obeys him?” They had never seen anything like this before. Matthew stresses again that Jesus is no ordinary person.

The story has great symbolism for believers. It is about the miraculous quieting of the sea by Jesus in which the disciples learn about His power and the meaning of discipleship. The boat is symbolic of the church and the storms the evil that threatens it (cf. 16:18). The call to discipleship involves risks but we know that the Master is always there to protect us. Whatever storms may be encountered the sovereign Lord who has called them to discipleship will look after His own and be with them until the end of the age (18:20; 28:20).

The Driving Out Of The Demons (8:28-34)

The fifth specific miracle in chapter eight concerns the exorcism of demons from the two demon-possessed men in Gadera. Jesus demonstrates His authority over the supernatural realm by this miracle.

Matt. 8:28 And when he came to the other side, into the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him as they were coming out of the tombs; they were exceedingly violent, so that no one was able to pass that way.

Note on a variant reading: There are three main spellings of this place in the manuscripts. *Gerasa, Gadara, Gergesa*.

And when he came to the other side, into the country of the Gadarenes, There is a question as to the exact location as to where this occurred.

two demon-possessed men met him Mark only mentions one demon-possessed man.

as they were coming out of the tombs; This not only associates them with the ritually unclean but shows a close association with death and the powers of evil (cf. Isaiah 65:4; Matthew 23:27).

they were exceedingly violent, so that no one was able to pass that way The violent nature of these men is stressed. Another seemingly impossible case as far as the world was concerned.

Matt. 8:29 And behold, they shouted out, saying, “What have we to do with you, Son of God? Are you come here to torment us before the time?”

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *Jesus* before *Son*. Instead of *torment* some manuscripts have *destroy*.

And behold, Matthew calls attention to another exceptional thing that will occur.

they shouted out, saying, “What have we to do with you, What do we have in common? or What do you want from us?

Son of God? The title has appeared earlier in the gospel (cf. 1:23; 2:15; and 3:17). It has only been used explicitly by the devil.

Are you come here to torment us before the time?" The demons recognized that there was going to be a final judgment. The time had not yet come for their torment.

Matt. 8:30 Now there was some distance from them a large herd of pigs grazing.

Note on variant readings: One Latin manuscript has *not* before *some distance*. A few manuscripts do not have the word *large*.

Now there was some distance from them a large herd of pigs grazing. The fact that there was swine being herded shows the population was non-Jewish.

Matt. 8:31 The demons were begging him, saying, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs."

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *send us* some manuscripts read *permit us to go away*.

The demons were begging him, saying, The demons have a request of Jesus. It is interesting that we see the demons begging Jesus to grant this request.

"If you drive us out, They assume that He is going to drive them out of the men.

send us into the herd of pigs." Several questions occur in this episode for which there is no answer: First, why do the demons make such a request? The Scripture gives no answer.

Matt. 8:32 And he said to them, "Go." And after they came out, they went into the pigs; and behold, all the herd rushed down the cliff into the sea and died in the water.

Note on a variant reading: After *herd* many manuscripts read *of pigs*.

And he said to them, "Go." Jesus commands the demons to leave with one word

And after they came out, they went into the pigs; There was an immediate response to the word of Jesus.

and behold, Matthew wants our attention.

all the herd rushed down the cliff into the sea Jesus is also the Lord of the supernatural realm. Not even the pigs were prepared to contain the demons.

and died in the water. More unanswered questions: Why does Jesus heed their request? What was the fate of the demons when the swine died?

Matt. 8:33 But the ones tending them ran away, and went away into the city and reported all things that happened, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men.

But the ones tending them ran away, Obviously afraid of what they had just witnessed.

and went away into the city and reported all things that happened, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. This would have been several miles from the sea.

Matt. 8:34 And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to depart from their region.

Note on a variant reading: One Syriac manuscript does not have *their region*.

And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to depart from their region. This miracle brought out the multitudes. To these non-Jewish people Jesus must have looked strange and dangerous. Instead of the multitudes following Jesus, here they tell Him to depart.

Summary to Chapter 8

Chapter eight marks a transition from the Sermon on the Mount. It is devoted to a series of five specific miracles performed by Jesus where He shows His credentials. Matthew will record five other specific miracles of Jesus in chapter 9 to show that Jesus has authority in every conceivable area.

By the simple touch of His hand (8:3,15) Jesus heals complex diseases immediately. On another occasion, His touch is not even needed where He heals the centurions servant at a distance (8:8,13).

Though not asking for healing, Simon Peter's mother-in-law is cured of her fever.

His power is not limited to healing. He is also the Lord over the natural realm as He stills the storm on the Sea of Galilee.

In addition, He is the Lord of the supernatural realm where He drives the demons out of the Gadarene demoniacs (8:16,28ff.).

The conclusion is that Jesus is Lord of all!

**Matthew
Chapter 9**

Matthew continues his chronicling specific miracles of Jesus that demonstrate His authority over various realms. In this chapter we will discover, among other things, that Jesus not only can forgive sin, He also is Lord over life and death.

The Healing Of The Paralyzed Man (9:1-8)

The sixth specific miracle that Matthew records concerns the healing of the paralyzed man in Capernaum. In this episode, Jesus shows that He has the authority to forgive sins (in the unseen realm) by performing a miraculous sign in the realm that can be seen and investigated. Contrary to other religious leaders, Jesus backed up the claims that He made.

Matt. 9:1 And after getting into a boat, he crossed over, and came unto his own city.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts have *Jesus* before *after getting*. Many manuscripts read *the boat*.

And after getting into a boat, he crossed over, The sixth miracle story is devoted ability of the Messiah to forgive sin.. This transitional verse refers to the return journey of the trip begun in 8:23, where Jesus got into a boat (8:18).

and came unto his own city. Capernaum (cf. 4:13; 8:5; see also Mark 2:1).

Matt. 9:2 And behold, they were bringing to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven.”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *are forgiven*, many manuscripts read *have been forgiven*. After *forgiven* many manuscripts read *you*.

And behold Matthew’s favorite term.

they were bringing to him a paralytic, The extent of his paralysis is not told.

lying on a bed The people who brought him are not stated, probably his family or his friends.

And when Jesus saw their faith, We have the emphasis on the faith of the people.

he said to the paralytic, “Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven.” Forgiveness of sins is something only God can do (Isaiah 43:25).

Matt. 9:3 And behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, “This man is blaspheming.”

And behold, Again the emphasis.

certain of the scribes said within themselves, They were not ready yet to launch a public attack.

“This man is blaspheming.” Blasphemy means to revile the very name of God. Yet Matthew makes it clear that to oppose Jesus is to oppose God. The resistance of Jesus that begins here will lead to His death. Hence we have an important stage in the rejection of Jesus with this statement by the religious rulers.

Matt. 9:4 And Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, “Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts?”

Note on variant readings: Instead of *perceiving* their thoughts some manuscripts read *knowing*. After *said* some manuscripts read *to them*. Many manuscripts read *you yourselves* instead of *you*.

And Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, He supernaturally discerned their thinking.

“Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts?” He knew their thoughts were evil.

Matt. 9:5 For what is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk?’

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *are forgiven*, many manuscripts read *have been forgiven*.

For what is easier, to say, Not what is easier to *do*.

‘Your sins are forgiven,’ Many have made this claim with nothing to back it up.

or to say, ‘Rise up and walk?’ Or to tell something to rise up immediately and walk. Much easier to say to someone your sins are forgiven because no one can test this claim. The claim to be able to heal, however, can be readily tested.

Matt. 9:6 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins—then he said to the paralytic—“Rise up, take up your bed, and go into your house.”

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins— Jesus confers forgiveness of sins. Notice that we can know that Jesus has the authority to forgive sins. The authority of Jesus has been a special emphasis of this gospel since the end of the Sermon on the Mount (7:29) where it was seen in word and now it is seen in the healing

narratives where it is seen in deed (cf. 8:9). It remains an important theme right to the end of the gospel (cf. 10:1; 21:23-27; 28:18).

then he said to the paralytic—Jesus addresses the man in need.

“Rise up, take up your bed, and go into your house.” The command of Jesus for the man to be healed.

Matt. 9:7 And he rose up, and went away to his house.

And he rose up, and went away to his house. The man got up from his bed immediately. See Mark 2:12. The healing was complete to the place where he could walk out of the house with his bed.

Matt. 9:8 But when the crowds saw this, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, the One who had given such authority on behalf of men.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *became afraid* or *filled with awe* many manuscripts read *marveled* or *were astonished*.

But when the crowds saw this, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, It is God who gets the glory.

the One who had given such authority on behalf of men. This was something they had never seen before (cf. Mark 2:12). Here again the authority of Jesus is at the center of the passage. The one who can heal has also the power to attack the very root of sickness and suffering, namely, sin. There can be no ultimate healing, well-being, or peace unless the evil power opposed to these things is defeated. The healings performed by Jesus are signs of the imminent defeat of sin.

The Calling of Matthew And The Feast At His House (9:9-13)

The author of the first gospel will explain his conversion and the subsequent feast Jesus attended at his house. Jesus' mixing with the tax collectors and “sinners” was a sore spot with the Pharisees who prided themselves on being separate from these people.

Matt. 9:9 And as Jesus was going along from there, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the tax collector's booth; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose up, and followed after him.

And as Jesus was going along from there, Jesus leaves the house in Capernaum.

He saw a man named Matthew, The author Matthew is now introduced to us. He is only one of three of Jesus' disciples for whom there is no record of anything that he said (the others were Simon the Cananean and James the less). In Mark's gospel he is called the son of Alphaeus. This has led some to suggest that he was the brother of James the son of Alphaeus. This, however, cannot be proven. There are many names in the New

Testament that many people shared (Mary, Jacob, Joseph, Judah, Simon, etc.).

sitting at the tax collector's booth; Tax collectors were despised. They were looked at as self-serving and parasitic individuals. Thiede explains the role of the tax collector:

He was more than a *telones*, which in Greek could refer to an official who was in charge of a customs station. In his case, he was in charge of a major border crossing. At Capernaum, two forms of levies were involved. One was the sea tax which fishermen had to pay in Roman times. The other was the land border tax leveled on goods traveling along the Via Maris, the important trade route between Damascus (90k km/56 mi. inland) and the Mediterranean Sea. This road crossed the domain of Philip the Tetrarch and touched the border with the Galilean territory of Herod Antipas adjacent to Capernaum, where there was also a junction leading toward Tyre and Chorazin. Recent research has been able to establish that Levi-Matthew was an influential customs official, perhaps even the leaseholder or tenant of the station in accordance with the bureaucratic practice of the time (Thiede, pp. 16, 17).

and he said to him, "Follow me." The call of Matthew to follow Christ. That Jesus should call a tax collector to be His disciple must have been in itself scandalous.

And he rose up, and followed after him. There was immediate response. Luke tells us that he left behind all things. While fishermen could return to their boats (see John 21:3), a tax collector gave up his occupation all together.

Matt. 9:10 And it happened while he was reclining in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting down together with Jesus and his disciples.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts, including *Sinaiticus*, do not have *that*.

And it happened while he was reclining in the house, Luke tells us what Matthew does not—this is Matthew's own house. In his case, leaving all things did not mean forsaking his house. Luke tells us that Matthew immediately invited Jesus for a banquet at his house (5:29).

that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting down together with Jesus and his disciples. Matthew's former colleagues were now given the chance to meet Jesus.

Matt. 9:11 And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with tax collectors and sinners?"

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *and drinking* after *eating*.

And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with tax collectors and sinners?” In that culture table fellowship was regarded as a very important symbol of closeness. The word translated “tax collectors” is placed first in the clause for emphasis.

Matt. 9:12 But when he heard this, he said, “The strong do not have need of a doctor, but the ones who are sick.”

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *Jesus heard* rather than *He heard*. After *He said* many manuscripts read *to them*.

But when he heard this, Although the question was addressed to the disciples, it inquired not about the reason for *their* conduct but rather for their teachers conduct.

he said, “The strong do not have need of a doctor, but the ones who are sick.” This may be a proverbial saying.

Matt. 9:13 But you go and learn what this means, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” For I did not come to call righteous but sinners.

Note on a variant reading: After *sinners* many manuscripts have *to repentance*.

But you go and learn what this means, If the Pharisees refer to Jesus as the teacher then He will give them something to go and learn. They are called to reflect upon the real meaning of the text.

“I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” Jesus does not deny the validity of *sacrifice* here or anywhere in His teaching (cf. 5:23-24). He is speaking about another concern—to the danger of religious ritualism that is all external.

For I did not come to call righteous but sinners. The second statement deals with the present situation. His answer would have had the same shocking effect as 8:11-12. The ones who are to be called, not only to this meal but to the Messianic banquet, should be righteous ones. Jesus, however, reverses the standards of their religion, and invites only the unrighteous. When Jesus called Matthew the tax collector to be among His twelve disciples He shows the universal scope of His compassion. The mission of Jesus is based not upon merit but upon mercy. The wonderful evangelistic banquet that Matthew holds is a very real sense an example of the gospel itself. The totally unworthy have been called to be part of His kingdom (1 Timothy 1:15).

The Question About Fasting (9:14-17)

John the Baptists’ disciples come to Jesus and ask Him about fasting. Jesus and His disciples are feasting while John’s disciples and the Pharisees are fasting. They want to know why.

Matt. 9:14 Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast [often], but your disciples do not fast?”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the word *often*.

Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, This fact is somewhat surprising that John the Baptist who is now in prison still has a group of followers.

“Why do we and the Pharisees fast [often], but your disciples do not fast?” Their fasting in preparation for the coming kingdom was in remarkable contrast to the behavior of Jesus who was controlled by the joy of the coming kingdom.

Jesus possesses a rather different concept of righteousness than do the Pharisees. He associates with tax collectors and sinners, even banqueting together with them, and now as the disciples of John point out, He and His disciples do not fast. The only required fast in the Old Testament was for the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29-31) but the Pharisees went far beyond that. The question concerns how a person practices righteousness.

Matt. 9:15 Then Jesus said to them, “The guests of the bridegroom cannot mourn while the bridegroom is still with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *mourn* some manuscripts read *fast*. After *fast* a few manuscripts have *in those days*.

Then Jesus said to them, “The guests of the bridegroom cannot mourn while the bridegroom is still with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. He answers with the imagery of a bridegroom and His attendants. The bridegroom image in the Old Testament refers to God as the *husband* of Israel (Isaiah 62:4,5; Isaiah 54:5,6; Hosea 2:16-20). In the New Testament it is applied to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22-27; Revelation 19:7).

Though this is not quite a prediction of His death (cf. 16:21) it is the first clear allusion to the future and unexpected death of Jesus (cf. 26:11; Luke 17:22).

Matthew thus finds a place for fasting in the church. The early church document *The Didache*, (the teaching of the Twelve), encouraged Christians to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays compared to the Monday and Thursday when the Jews fasted (8:1). Fasting in this case will be a spiritual discipline practiced with prayer, for such purposes as sharpening one's focus or deepening one's experience.

Matt. 9:16 No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, and the tear becomes worse.

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, and the tear becomes worse. Jesus gives two analogies to show that He is doing a new work. The old cannot fit with the new. The gospel cannot be added to Judaism.

Matt. 9:17 Neither do they put new wine in old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine is poured out and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *the new wine bursts the wineskins* instead of *the wineskins burst*.

Neither do they put new wine in old wineskins; Similar analogy with wine skins—the old and the new don't mix.

otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine is poured out and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved. If old skins are used, 3 things will happen 1. the skins will tear, 2. the wine will be poured out and 3. the skins will be ruined.

But they put new wine into new skins and both are preserved The new wine is the reality of the kingdom.

Two Healings: The Hemorrhaging Woman And The Ruler's Daughter (9:18-26)

A ruler comes to Jesus to ask Him to heal his daughter who has recently died. On the way to see this young girl, a woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years is healed by touching Jesus. When He arrives at the ruler's house, Jesus brings the young girl back to life—showing that He has authority over life and death. These are the seventh and eighth specific miracles of Jesus that Matthew records.

Matt. 9:18 While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came and began to bow down before him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but you come and put your hand on her, and she will live."

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts have *certain* before ruler. Other manuscripts read *one came toward (Him)*. Other manuscripts read *came unto (Him)*.

While he was saying these things to them, Matthew's transition to a new story, not necessarily a time indicator.

behold, a ruler came He is to be understood as a synagogue official. We learn from Mark and Luke that his name was Jairus.

and began to bow down before him, The man falls down before Jesus with his desperate request. This is the same Greek word translated worship.

In this context it probably refers to a reverential request rather than worship of Deity.

saying, “My daughter has just died; but you come and put your hand on her, and she will live.” Matthew makes it clear that a resurrection is in view. He has faith that Jesus can raise her from the dead. This is the only reference in Matthew by healing from the laying on of hands (but see Mark 6:5; 7:32; 8:23, 23; Luke 4:40; 13:13).

Matt. 9:19 And Jesus rose up and began to follow him, with his disciples.

And Jesus rose up and began to follow him, with his disciples. This shows that the disciples are going to be witnesses to the event.

Matt. 9:20 And behold, a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came behind him and touched the edge of his garment.

Note on a variant reading: A couple of manuscripts read *being in her sickness* (John 5:5) after *years*.

And behold, a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages She suffered not only the inconvenience and physical danger of loss of blood but also the stigma of ritual uncleanness.

for twelve years This is the same age as the young girl who has just died.

came behind him and touched the edge of his garment. This probably refers not simply to the edge of His garment but to the tassels (the Hebrew *tsitsit*) required by Numbers 15:38-41 and Deuteronomy 22:12 for the four corners of the outer garment (cf. 23:5). Jesus is thus faithful to the Law in His dress.

Matt. 9:21 For she was saying within herself, “If only I touch his garment, I will be healed.”

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Sinaiticus*, along with two other manuscripts, do not have the word *only*.

For she was saying within herself, “If only I touch his garment, This woman had deep faith in the power of Jesus.

I will be healed.” Literally “I will be saved” refers here to being free from her sickness. Elsewhere in Matthew the same verb has the meaning of salvation (1:21; 10:22; 16:25; 18:11; 19:25).

Matt. 9:22 And when Jesus turned and saw her, he said, “Have courage, daughter; your faith has saved you.” And the woman was healed from that moment.

Note on variant readings: A few manuscripts, including *Codex Sinaiticus*, read *he turned* rather than *Jesus turned*. Many manuscripts read *turned around* instead of *turned*. One manuscript reads *stopped and turned*.

And when Jesus turned and saw her, he said, “Have courage, daughter; This was the same words that Jesus used earlier to the paralytic.

your faith has saved you.” The important subject of faith was first introduced in 8:10. Only here in Matthew is the significance of faith for healing stressed. Matthew makes “faith” the subject of the verb “make whole.” It is clear that Jesus wanted to heal the woman.

And the woman was healed from that moment. It is clear that Jesus was the One that made her well. This is the seventh specific miracle Matthew records in these two chapters.

Matt. 9:23 And when Jesus came into the ruler’s house, and saw the flute-players and the noisy crowd,

And when Jesus came into the ruler’s house, When Jesus comes to the ruler’s house He encounters people readying themselves for the funeral. This would take place the same day as was custom in that culture.

and saw the flute-players The flute players were professional hired musicians.

and the noisy crowd, The crowd was obvious in a saddened state as they were mourning the death of this young girl.

Matt. 9:24 He began to say, “Go away; for the child is not dead, but sleeping.” And they began to ridicule him.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *He began to say* many manuscripts read *He said to them*.

He began to say, “Go away; Jesus tells them to leave.

for the child is not dead, but sleeping.” Death for Jesus is not the final word. He does not deny the *reality* of her death, only the *finality*.

And they began to ridicule him. Jesus’ statement is ridiculed by the people.

Matt. 9:25 And when the crowd had been put out, he entered in and seized her hand; and the young girl got up.

And when the crowd had been put out, After the crowd had been removed Jesus enters. Matthew does not mention the four disciples nor the girl’s parents as does Mark.

he entered in and seized her hand; The same words used in the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law.

and the young girl got up. The eighth specific miracle in these two chapters is the *reanimation* or the bringing back to life of this young girl. This is different than the resurrection promised to believers for this girl eventually died again. The same was the case with Lazarus (John 11) and the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7). When the believer is raised from the dead they will never have to die again (1 Corinthians 15:51-58).

Matt. 9:26 And the news of this went out into all of that region.

And the news of this went out into all of that region. No attention is called to the great faith of the ruler that is evident in the first part of the narrative nor the report is given of the astonishment of those who saw the girl emerge from the room alive (cf. Mark 5:42).

These miracle narratives point beyond themselves to realities at the heart of the gospel. The raising of the dead to life is a basic symbolism of the gospel (e.g. Romans 4:17; Ephesians 2:1,5; Colossians 2:13). What Jesus did for the girl He has done for the church. There is also the promise that beyond this life Jesus will literally raise the dead (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:52,53).

The Healing Of Two Blind Men (9:27-31)

The ninth specific miracle concerns two blind men who come to Jesus to receive their sight.

Matt. 9:27 And while Jesus was going on from there, two blind men followed after [him], crying out and saying, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts do not have the word *Him*. Before *Son of David* a few manuscripts read *Lord*.

And while Jesus was going on from there, two blind men followed after [him], Blindness was frequently regarded as a judgment of God (Genesis 19:11; Exodus 4:11; Deuteronomy 28:28 ff.). These two followed Him, not as disciples but in order to be healed.

crying out and saying, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" The Son of David was a royal figure (2 Samuel 7:12-16) whose kingdom would have no end.

Matt. 9:28 And when he came into the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them. "Do you believe that I am able to do this thing?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord."

Note on variant readings: A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) have *two* before *blind men*. After *thing* a few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) have *to you*.

And when he came into the house, The house is not specified, but it cannot be the house of verse 23 or verse 10. It probably refers to the house of Peter in Capernaum.

the blind men came to him; Here they approach Jesus, He does not come to them.

and Jesus said to them. “Do you believe that I am able to do this thing?” This question of Jesus stresses the importance of faith.

They said to him, “Yes, Lord.” They answered Him directly.

Matt. 9:29 Then he touched their eyes saying, “According to your faith let it be done to you.”

Then he touched their eyes saying, “According to your faith let it be done to you.” Again Jesus heals directly by touch (cf. 8:3, 15; 9:25) as will be the case in 20:34. He stresses the relationship between faith and healing. The *fact* of faith is in view, not the *amount*.

Matt. 9:30 And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly warned them, saying, “See that you let no one know it.”

And their eyes were opened. Again an immediate healing.

Then Jesus sternly warned them, saying, “See that you let no one know it.” Jesus wants to avoid stirring up the popular expectations concerning the Messiah.

Matt. 9:31 But when they went out, they spread the news about him in all that land.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) do not have *all*.

But when they went out, they spread the news about him in all that land. Once again, despite Jesus telling the ones healed to keep silent, the report spreads. It is no coincidence that the blind are the first to call Jesus the Son of David. A number of miracles in this chapter have Messianic associations. The time of the Messiah would be the time when the blind received their sight. It would be the age of fulfillment. Those who walk in darkness have thus now received light (4:16) and the children of the kingdom are now in turn “the light of the world” (5:14-16).

The Healing Of The Mute and Demon-Possessed Man (9:32-34)

The tenth and last specific miracle that Matthew records in these two chapters concerns a man who has problems in both the natural and supernatural realm. Jesus shows that His authority extends to both areas at the same time.

Matt. 9:32 But as they were going out, behold, they brought to him a man mute and demon-possessed.

Note on a variant reading: Several manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*) do not have the Greek word translated *man*. The word, however, is understood from the context.

But as they were going out, behold, they brought to him a man mute and demon-possessed. This transition points to the constant pressure upon Jesus to heal.

Matt. 9:33 And when he had driven out the demon, the mute man spoke. And the crowd marveled, saying, “Never has it been seen in this manner in Israel.”

And when he had driven out the demon, the mute man spoke. His ability to speak came when the demon left.

And the crowd marveled saying, Matthew does not record whether the crowd saw the miracle or the results of it afterward.

“Never has it appeared in this manner in Israel.” This statement does not refer to the exorcism of the demon but rather the miracle of the mute man’s ability to speak.

Matt. 9:34 But the Pharisees were saying, “By the ruler of the demons he is driving out the demons.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have verse 34.

But the Pharisees were saying, “By the ruler of the demons he is driving out the demons.” In contrast to the crowds, the Pharisees had already begun to evaluate Jesus in a hostile manner. They do not deny the power of Jesus but attribute it to black magic. This verse presents the first open expression of their hostility toward Him (9:3 is still private and 9:14 is only implicit). What begins here will escalate quickly as the gospel proceeds (cf. 12:2, 10, 14, 24; 22:15) and anticipates what will be the disciples own experience (cf. 10:25).

The Compassion Of Jesus (9:35-38)

Chapter nine ends with the account of Jesus’ continually teaching and healing the sick. His motive for doing so is compassion toward the lost and hopeless.

Matt. 9:35 And Jesus was going around all the cities and small towns, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing all sickness and diseases.

Note on variant reading: Some manuscripts have *among the people* after *diseases*. Other manuscripts read *and many followed after Him*. A few

manuscripts, including *Sinaiticus*, have *among the people and many followed after Him* after *diseases*.

And Jesus was going around all the cities and small towns, Matthew, like the other gospel writers, gives us only a representative sampling of Jesus words and deeds.

teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the good news of the kingdom, The ministry of Jesus consisted mainly of teaching and preaching. Teaching and preaching is what is stressed, not healing.

and healing all sickness and diseases. The healings only confirmed the authority of His teaching.

Matt. 9:36 And seeing the crowds, he was moved with compassion concerning them, because they were troubled and helpless, as sheep having no shepherd.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *He was moved* some manuscripts read *Jesus was moved*. Instead of *troubled* some manuscripts read *wearied*.

And seeing the crowds, he was moved with compassion concerning them, because they were troubled and helpless, What causes Jesus compassion is not the abundance of sickness, He has seen that before. What moved Him was the great spiritual need of the people.

as sheep having no shepherd. The reference to sheep having no shepherd is a common Old Testament image (Numbers 27:17; 2 Chronicles 18:16).

Matt. 9:37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is truly plentiful, but the workers are few.”

Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is truly plentiful, but the workers are few.” In light of this great need, and just prior to the sending out of the twelve, Jesus refers to the harvest and the need for workers. The crowds think mainly of their physical needs but they have a more serious need of which their sicknesses are just indicators.

Matt. 9:38 Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.”

Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.” This should be our prayer.

Summary to Chapter Nine

Chapter nine follows Matthew’s chronicling of the various specific miracles of Jesus and the different areas of authority in which they touch. He begins by recording the account of Jesus’ healing of the paralyzed man (1-8). In this account Jesus claims the authority to forgive sins. His claim is backed up by the instantaneous healing of this man.

The Gospel According To Matthew

Next Jesus calls Matthew, the tax collector, to be His disciple. After Matthew leaves all to follow Him, he invites Jesus to a great feast at his house. A variety of tax collectors and sinners show up and this causes the religious leaders to question Jesus disciples as to why He is eating with these people. Jesus responds by saying that it is the sick that need a doctor, not the ones who are well. He came for the purpose of saving sinners.

Next, Matthew tells us of the plea of a ruler whose daughter has recently died. As Jesus is on His way to heal her a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for a number of years was healed by merely touching the border of His garment. Jesus arrives at the rulers house and brings his young daughter back from the dead. Then Jesus heals two blind men who appeal to Him as the Son of David. The last of the ten specific miracles that Matthew records in chapters eight and nine concerns a man who is both demon-possessed and mute. Jesus restores him to physical and spiritual health. Finally, Jesus is moved with compassion on the lost multitudes, for they are as sheep without a shepherd. He encourages His disciples to pray that more laborers will be sent into the harvest.

**Matthew
Chapter 10**

This chapter contains Matthew's second major discourse—the calling and the commissioning of the twelve. Having led the disciples to feel interest in the multitudes that are perishing, and encouraging them to pray for laborers, Jesus now commands them to go forth and labor themselves.

The Calling Of Jesus' Disciples (10:1-4)

The disciples of Jesus are called and commissioned for the ministry.

Matt. 10:1 And after summoning his twelve disciples, he gave them authority over the unclean spirits, to drive them out, and to heal every sickness and every disease.

Note on variant readings: A couple of manuscripts read *against* rather than *over*. After *disease* a couple of manuscripts have *among the people*.

And after summoning his twelve disciples, Matthew has not mentioned the selection of the twelve which took place before this time (Mark 3:13; Luke 6:13). At the time when he wrote, the twelve apostles were well known. The delay causes some ambiguity about earlier references to the “disciples” where a larger group than the twelve may be in view. He refers to the twelve again in 10:5; 11:1; 20:17; 26:14, 20, 47.

The first four members of the twelve have already been introduced to us (4:18-22) as well as Matthew himself (9:9). The choice of twelve disciples is symbolic, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. 19:28) and it itself suggests the fulfillment of the hopes of Israel (cf. Acts 20:28).

he gave them authority over the unclean spirits, All authority had been given to Him (28:18-20) and hence to them.

to drive them out, The demons will be subject to them.

and to heal every sickness and every disease. Everything will be subject to their authority. Scripture makes a distinction between healing and exorcism. All sickness is not a result of demon possession.

Matt. 10:2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, the one called Peter; and Andrew his brother; and Jacob (James) the son of Zebedee; and John his brother;

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts do not have *and* before *Jacob*.

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The word “apostle” has the idea of someone who is sent who shares the same authority of the one who sends, as his representative. This is the only time the word is used in Matthew. Paul makes a distinction between the Twelve and all the apostles (1 Corinthians 15:5,7).

As there were twelve tribes of Israel so are there twelve apostles. The first century Jewish community that lived next to the Dead Sea and left us the Dead Sea Scrolls also had twelve members in their council (1QS 7.1ff.).

first Simon, Simon is a Greek name, but in the New Testament, it is probably a contraction of Simeon. Interestingly, the reference of Peter being first among the apostles is not found in Mark. Since Mark wrote his gospel from Peter's perspective it is understandable why this reference would be omitted.

the one called Peter; Peter is first in every list of the apostles (first among equals) and plays a prominent role in Matthew's gospel. He was a native of Bethsaida (John 1:44), a town on the Sea of Galilee, described and condemned in 11:21. His father's name was Jonah or John.

He and his brother Andrew were fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. They were probably disciples of John the Baptist before coming to know Jesus (John 1:35 ff.)

Jesus gave to Simon when he first approached Him the surname *Cephas* (John 1:42) which in Aramaic signified a *rock* or a *stone*. This was translated into Greek as *Petros* which means the same thing. The Latin form is *Petrus*, English, Peter. The Aramaic form of his name, Cephas, is always used by Paul and nowhere else in the New Testament except John 1:43.

and Andrew his brother; He was introduced to us in chapter four and is not referred to again in this gospel. His name is Greek meaning "manly." The facts concerning his parentage, residence, occupation and early discipleship are mentioned in connection with Peter. The only other cases in which he appears is John 6:8; 12:22; Mk 13:3.

His life, however, has a great lesson for us. He was the one who brought to Jesus his own brother Simon. Thus the usefulness of Simon Peter is, in one sense, due to the brother who told him of Jesus. And so, many a one in every age, little known himself, and of no marked influence otherwise, has been among the great benefactors of mankind by bringing to Jesus some other person who proved widely useful.

and Jacob (James) the son of Zebedee Already introduced to us in 4:21,22. He was probably the elder since he is usually mentioned first. John is sometimes placed first (Luke 9:28; Acts 12:2) probably because he was more prominent. Jacob (James) was the first martyr among the apostles (Acts 12:2).

James is originally the same name as Jacob being written in Greek *Iacobos*, and transliterated into Latin, as *Iacobos*. In the 1611 *King James Version* of the Bible which was published in England an extraordinary thing occurred with respect to the New Testament. Whenever the name 'Jacob' occurred it was replaced by the King's name, 'James.' James is *not* a Jewish name, it appears nowhere in the Old Testament and there is no mention in the New Testament of the common Jewish name Jacob (other than quotations from

the Old Testament). Therefore, we have an example here of the translators making alterations to suit their own purposes.

and John his brother The author of the fourth gospel. James and John, with Peter make up a kind of inner circle of the disciples. They both appear together with Peter in the transfiguration (17:1). James and John also appear in connection with their mother's special request.

Matt. 10:3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; Jacob (James) the son of Alphaeus; and Thaddaeus;

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *Thaddaeus* some manuscripts read *Thaddaeus who was called Lebbaeus* while others read *Lebbaeus who was called Thaddaeus*. One manuscript has *Judas the Zealot*.

Philip This name occurs only here. It is Greek signifying "lover of horses." He must be distinguished from Philip the evangelist, of whom, we read in Acts.

and Bartholomew; Perhaps he is Nathaniel of John 1:45-51. Bartholomew not a name. He is actually *Bar Talmai* (son of Talmay; cf. 2 Samuel 13:37).

Thomas Mentioned only here in Matthew. The famous "doubter" of John's gospel (see chapter 20). The name Thomas means "twin" as does the Greek *didymos* (cf. John 11:16).

and Matthew the tax collector; The author of this gospel is referred to only here and in the narrative about him (9:9)

James the son of Alphaeus; He is found only here in Matthew. Son of Alphaeus distinguishes him from the other James, the brother of John.

and Thaddaeus This is his only mention in the gospel. He is probably to be equated with Judas the son of James in Luke and Acts. The name Judas may have been superseded by a new one, Thaddaeus, in order for there to be one Judas among the twelve. Or that after the betrayal he did not want the stigma that would be attached with the name Judas.

Matt. 10:4 Simon the Cananean; and Judas Iscariot, the one who also betrayed him.

Note on a variant reading: *Cananean* is spelled different ways in the manuscripts. There are textual problems with the name *Judas Iscariot*. Some manuscripts read *Judas from Kerioth*. Other manuscripts read *Skariotas* which has suggested a large number of derivations such as "bandit" or "traitor," "assassin" or "a man with a ruddy complexion."

Simon the Cananean; This word is not derived from Canaan nor Cana but from the Aramaic word *qanan* meaning "zealot" or "enthusiast" The name is thus equivalent to the label "zealot" given to Simon in the lists of

Luke and Acts and may refer to his intense nationalism and hatred of Rome. This is the only mention of him in Matthew.

and Judas Iscariot, Judas is mentioned more often than any of the other disciples in Matthew except for Peter. The name “Iscariot” is the Greek equivalent of the transliterated *Iscariot* which means “man from Kerioth.” Kerioth is located in southern Judea, twelve miles south of Hebron (John 15:25).

the one who also betrayed him This verse alludes to Jesus’ suffering and death. Notice the diverse character of the twelve which included fishermen, a tax collector, a zealot, and a traitor. The twelve represent the core of the new movement that will reveal the new activity of God.

Robert Mounce observes the following concerning the twelve.

It is noteworthy that only Peter, James, and John play any role in the Book of Acts. The disciples were all Jewish by ancestry and probably remained with that branch of Christianity after the church became increasingly Gentile in the second half of the first century. For that reason, our knowledge of their later lives comes primarily from tradition (Mounce, p. 91).

The Immediate Sending Out Of The Twelve (10:5-16)

After the twelve are commissioned, they are now given their instructions for their immediate ministry.

Matt. 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent out commanding them, saying, “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter into a city of the Samaritans.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *saying* one manuscript has *and say*.

These twelve Jesus sent out commanding them saying, When Jesus sent them out He gave them instructions.

“Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, This phrase is probably a Semitism meaning “toward the Gentiles.” It must have been surprising for Matthew’s first readers, for whom Gentile Christianity was a fact, that Jesus restricted the ministry of the twelve as well as His own.

and do not enter a city of the Samaritans This denotes the inhabitants of a region, (the Samaritans). The Samaritans, who were half-Jew and half-Gentile, were despised as racially intermixed and disloyal to the law. The Gentiles were viewed as outright pagans.

Matt. 10:6 Instead, go to the lost sheep—that is the house of Israel.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *go* one manuscript has *go away*.

Instead go to the lost sheep—that is the house of Israel The exclusion of the Gentiles and the Samaritans is made clear by this statement. The same phrase “lost sheep” is used in characterizing Jesus’ ministry (15:24) and recalls the reference to sheep without a shepherd (9:36).

Matthew makes it clear that this exclusion is only temporary (e.g. 21:43; 24:14). In fact, 28:19 rescinds this command. The fact that Jesus came initially to the Jews and only to them underlines God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises. In Jesus, God was being preeminently faithful to Israel.

Matt. 10:7 And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’

Note on a variant reading: After *saying* some manuscripts have *repent because*.

And as you go, preach, The basic message of the mission is now spelled out.

saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ The kingdom has arrived in the presence of the King.

Matt. 10:8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, drive out demons; freely you have received, freely give.

Note on a variant reading: There are five variant readings connected with the phrase *raise the dead*. Some manuscripts do not have the phrase at all, while other manuscripts place it at various places in the verse.

Heal the sick, All of these commands were intended to be understood literally. These miracles are important as signs that the kingdom has arrived. We note that Matthew has given examples of *each* of these in the ministry of Jesus Himself (see 8:15 for healing of the sick).

raise the dead, See 9:25 (Acts 9:36-43; 20:7-12).

cleanse the lepers, The first specific miracle that Matthew records is the healing of a leper (8:1-4).

drive out demons; Note Matthew 8:32.

freely you have received, freely give There is to be no charge for the proclamation that accompanies the healings.

Matt. 10:9 Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper into your belts.

Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper into your belts No one should sell the gospel. *Belts* refer to “money belts.”

Matt. 10:10 Neither a bag for your journey, or even two tunics, or sandals or a staff; for the laborer is worthy of his support.

Note on variant readings: Many manuscripts have *staffs* rather than *staff*. Some manuscripts read *reward* rather than *support*.

Neither a bag for your journey, This shows unrestricted commitment. The bag may have been a beggar's offering bag.

or even two tunics No extra clothes. The tunic was the inner garment.

or sandals An extra pair of sandals is not needed.

or a staff; Used both as an aid to walking and means of defense.

for the laborer is worthy of his support. They are not to profit from the gospel but their basic needs should be met.

Matt. 10:11 And into whichever city or small town you enter, search out and inquire who in it is worthy; and stay there until you go out.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *small town*.

Into whichever city The distinction is made between the big cities in which they are to go into and the small towns.

or small town you enter, They are to go into both. The good news of the kingdom is to go everywhere in Israel.

search out The disciples are to search out for people in each city.

and inquire who in it is worthy; The worthy ones are the ones who receive the message of the kingdom.

and stay there until you go out. Hospitality should be provided by the "worthy ones." There is no need to take along anything extra.

Matt. 10:12 And when you enter into the house, greet it.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *peace to this house* after *it*.

And when you enter into the house, greet it The greeting consisted of a benediction or blessing upon the house.

Matt. 10:13 And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

And if the house is worthy, The worthy ones receive the message.

let your peace come upon it; Those who receive the gospel receive God's special peace. This is not an inward feeling of tranquility or a lack of adversity from a ones enemies, rather it is the breaking down of the barriers between man and God. There will be well-being for that person because the struggle between God and them is now over (see Romans 5:1-5).

Mounce notes, “The Greek *eirene* has the same broad range of meanings as the Hebrew *shalom* (wholeness, health, and security)” (Mounce, p. 100).

but if it is not worthy, The unworthy ones reject the message.

let your peace return to you The unworthy ones receive no such blessing. Mounce writes: “In ancient days a pronouncement of this sort was thought to have an objective existence, It could be taken back as well as given. In Isaiah 55 God’s word is said to go out and accomplish that which he desires (Isa. 55:11)” (Mounce, p. 93).

Matt. 10:14 And whoever does not welcome you, or listens to your words, as you go outside that house or that city, shake off the dust from your feet.

Note on variant reading: One manuscript does not have *the house or*. After *city* some manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) have *small town*.

And whosoever does not welcome you, The ones who reject them and consequently reject Jesus.

or listens to your words, Those who refuse to believe.

as you go outside of that house or that city, Leave them!

shake off the dust from your feet The rejection of the gospel means God has rejected them. Shaking the dust off the feet is a symbolic gesture (see Pilate washing his hands 27:24) that the disciples have nothing in common with those who reject the message. The people and the house are now to be delivered over to divine judgment. Mounce writes, “The act itself is a way of saying that one is standing on what must be considered “heathen” soil that must not be carried back to the Holy Land” (Mounce, p. 93).

In Acts 13:51 Paul and Barnabas shake the dust from their feet when they protest against the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia. We also find Paul shaking off his clothes in Acts 18:6 (cf. Neh. 5:13) in protest against the Jews of Corinth. He says that their blood be on their own heads and that he is innocent of any responsibility.

Matt. 10:15 Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) have the *land of Gomorrah*.

Truly I say to you, A solemn statement

it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, The sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were notorious and they were symbolic for catastrophic judgment (Romans 9:29; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7).

They will also be mentioned later by Matthew in reference to the unbelief of Capernaum.

than for that city This shows there will be degrees of punishment in the next life (see Luke 12:48).

Matt. 10:16 Behold, I myself am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore become as wise as the serpents and as innocent as the doves.

Note on a variant reading: One manuscript (*Sinaiticus*) reads *serpent*.

Behold, I myself am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; The picture of danger could hardly be sharper.

therefore become as wise as the serpents The Greek translation of Genesis 3:1 used this word as describing Satan in the guise of a serpent.

and as innocent as the doves This may reflect a current proverb of that day.

Warnings About Future Hostility (10:17-25)

Jesus now warns His disciples about potential problems in the future.

Matt. 10:17 But beware of people; for they will deliver you over unto the councils, and they will flog you in their synagogues.

But beware of people; They need to be cautious of others.

for they will deliver you over unto the councils, This shows a serious problem between the believers and the existing Jewish authority.

and they will flog you in their synagogues Notice the emphasis on “their” synagogues.

Matt. 10:18 And you will be brought before rulers and kings because of me, as a testimony unto them, and to the Gentiles.

Note on a variant reading: A couple of manuscripts read *stand before* instead of *brought before*.

And you will be brought before rulers and kings because of me, The persecution will be because of Jesus.

as a testimony unto them, and to the Gentiles The scene shifts from a Jewish context to the mentioning of Gentiles.

Matt. 10:19 But when they deliver you over, do not worry how or what you will say; for it will be given to you in that hour what you should say.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts do not have the phrase. *for it will be given to you in that hour what you should say.*

But when they deliver you over, This refers to the time when they will be handed over to the authorities.

do not worry how or what you will say; They are to make their defense but they are instructed not to be anxious when they do so.

for it will be given to you in that hour what you should say. God will give them the right words.

Matt. 10:20 For it will not be you yourself that is speaking, but the Spirit of your Father who is speaking through you.

For it will not be your yourself that is speaking, The notion of Spirit-inspired utterance in special circumstances is not uncommon in the New Testament (cf. Acts 4:8).

but the Spirit of your Father who is speaking through you This unusual expression is unique in the New Testament.

Matt. 10:21 And brother will deliver over brother unto death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents, and they will cause them to be put to death.

And brother will deliver over brother unto death, Now the persecution becomes even more grim; family members will hand one another over to be put to death.

and a father his child; Parents will turn in their own children.

and children will rise up against parents, Children will also rise up against parents. No family relationship is safe.

and they will cause them to be put to death They will cause their demise.

Matt. 10:22 And you will be hated by all because of my name, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

And you will be hated by all because of my name, There will be widespread hatred of those who follow Jesus.

but the one who endures to the end will be saved The end refers to the end of a person's life or the end of the persecution (which is the end of the age). 1 John 2:9 tells us about those who do not endure (see also the parables of Matthew 13).

Matt. 10:23 When they persecute you in this city, flee to another; for truly, I say to you, "You will not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes."

Note on a variant reading: After the phrase *flee to another* some manuscripts have the phrase *if they persecute you in the other city flee to another one*.

When they persecute you in this city, Not if, but when they are persecuted.

flee to another. The disciples are told to flee from city to city.

for truly, I say to you, “You will not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes.” This statement is one of the most difficult in all of Matthew. What coming of the Son of Man is He referring to in this context? There are many views as to what Jesus meant.

1. The actual Second Coming is held by many commentators. They would have the human Jesus not knowing the time of His coming but assuming it to be soon. There are enormous problems with this view. Matthew 28:19, for example, precludes this view as being possible as the gospel will go out to the entire world.

2. Some outstanding event of the new age: the death, and resurrection of Christ or the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. This view contends that some major event such as the resurrection or Pentecost shifted the emphasis from the Jewish to the Gentile mission.

3. The destruction of Jerusalem. The destruction of Jerusalem foreshadows the final judgment. It also symbolizes the rejection of the gospel by the Jews. After the destruction of Jerusalem it was the Gentiles, not the Jews that received priority in the purpose of God.

Matt. 10:24 A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above his master.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) have *his teacher*.

A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above his master. A general truth. Master is Greek word *kurios* which is also translated Lord.

Matt. 10:25 It is enough for the disciple to become as his teacher, and the slave as his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebub, how much more his household members!

It is enough for the disciple to become as his teacher, The thought of these verses is self-evident and may reflect a common saying of that day.

and the slave as his master. The slaves will suffer the same fate as their Master. Here it refers to persecution. If Jesus suffered hostility and rejection so must His disciples.

If they have called the head of the house Beelzebub, First time the term Beelzebub appears in the Gospel. It means “Lord of the house” and thus it stands as a play on words opposite Jesus who is Lord of the household. Mounce writes: The exact origin of the name Beelzebub is uncertain, although many commentators connect it in some way with Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron (2 Kings 1:2,6). The Greek *oikodespotes* (“head of the house”) is a pun on the name Beelzebub” (Mounce p. 96).

how much more his household members! Housemaster and household members reflect the same relationship as teacher and disciple, master and servant.

The Correct Response To Hostility (10:26-31)

Jesus encourages His followers to fear God and not man when persecution comes.

Matt. 10:26 Therefore, do not fear them; for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed and nothing is hidden that will not be known.

Therefore do not fear them; The “them” is not specified. A general reference to the people.

for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed The gospel, up till now veiled in a degree of secrecy, will be made clear and plain through the preaching of the disciples.

and nothing is hidden that will not be known The same truth stated another way.

Matt. 10:27 That which I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light, and that which you are hearing in your ear, preach upon the rooftops.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *preach* a two manuscripts read *it is being preached* while one manuscript has *it will be preached*.

That which I say to you in the darkness, The private words between Jesus and His disciples.

speak in the light, Publicly.

and that which you are hearing in your ear, He again refers to private conversations.

preach upon the rooftops After the resurrection it will be a time of proclamation. Roofs were used on a regular basis for important public announcements.

Matt. 10:28 And do not fear them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear the one who is able to destroy both the body and soul in Gehenna.

And do not fear them who kill the body, The worst thing that human persecution can do is kill the body.

but are not able to kill the soul; Human beings can only kill the body, they have no power over the soul.

but rather fear the one That is God who will be the final Judge of all.

who is able to destroy both the body and soul in Gehenna. This speaks of His final judgment.

Matt. 10:29 Two sparrows are sold for a copper coin are they not? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

Two sparrows are sold for a copper coin are they not? Sparrows were very inexpensive, the cheapest living things used for food. A Roman copper coin (an *assarion*) was worth about 1/16 of a denarius.

Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. This shows the scope of the Father's knowledge and care.

Matt. 10:30 And even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

And even the hairs of your head are all numbered. *Your* is emphasized in Greek. This is a variation of the common idea that when God protects, not a single hair on a person's head is allowed to perish (e.g. 1 Samuel 14:45; 2 Samuel 14:11; Luke 21:18; Acts 27:34). Thus we need not fear what our enemies can do to us.

Matt. 10:31 Therefore do not be afraid; you yourselves are more valuable than many sparrows.

Note on a variant reading: After *be afraid* some manuscripts read *of them*.

Therefore do not be afraid; The Bible encourages the believer to fear not. This is because we are in the ultimate control of God.

you yourselves are more valuable than many sparrows. Consequently we should not be afraid. The sparrows are worth practically nothing yet they are not outside God's will and attention. This being the case, God will take care of His own who are more valuable than sparrows.

The Two Choices: Acknowledging Or Denying Jesus (10:32-33)

Jesus again states that there are only two choices—following Him in faith or denying Him.

Matt. 10:32 Therefore, whoever acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge him before My Father who is in Heaven.

Therefore, whosoever acknowledges me before others. This could be in the context of a court trial or water baptism. It is public acknowledgment of Jesus. Those who accept His message follow Him in discipleship (Roman 10:9).

I also will confess him before my Father who is in Heaven. This results in an acknowledgment of them by God the Father. The use of “My Father” again stresses the unique relationship Jesus had with Him.

Matt. 10:33 But whoever denies me before people, I also will deny him before my Father who is in heaven.

But whoever denies me before people, This makes the same point in a negative way.

I also will deny him before my Father who is in heaven To reject Jesus it be rejected by Jesus before the Father. There is no middle ground or neutrality. One is either for Jesus or against Him. No mere prophet, teacher or Rabbi is capable of such words—Jesus stands apart from all of them. 1 John 2:23 tells us to reject Jesus is to reject God. You cannot have God without believing in Jesus.

Jesus' Coming Brings Division (10:34-39)

The result of Jesus coming into the world will be to divide families.

Matt. 10:34 Do not ever imagine that I can to bring peace upon the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Do not ever imagine that I can to bring peace upon the earth; The way the statement is given suggests that it would have been their natural inclination of the disciples to assume that Jesus came to bring peace. Was not the gospel a message of peace (cf 5:9; 10:13)? Would not the kingdom age bring peace with it (Luke 1:79; Isaiah 9:6; 11:9)?

The answer is yes in its final realization and even in some sense in the present (John 14:27) but the interim period in which the kingdom is proclaimed will not be characterized by peace.

I did not come to bring peace, but a sword The present time will bring hostility even between family members. This hostility is described by Jesus with the metaphor of a sword. The sense in which Jesus came to bring a sword is explained in the following verses.

Matt. 10:35 For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

For I came to set a man against his father, This describes more the effect of the ministry of Jesus than its purpose. Response to His message will cause division.

and a daughter against her mother, Another close family relationship that will be strained because of Jesus.

and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; Family relationships, which were so important in that culture, would be a source of division.

Matt. 10:36 And a man's enemies will be members of his own household.

And a man's enemies will be members of his own household The believers would be rejected by their own family members.

Matt. 10:37 The one who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and the one who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including Vaticanus) do not have the phrase *and the one who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.*

The one who loves his father or mother above me Family relationships are important but they must not be allowed to divert a disciple from loyalty to Jesus.

is not worthy of me; Those who allow such loyalty to get in the way should not be Jesus' disciple.

and the one who loves his son or daughter The same idea with loving family members..

more than me Of course we are to love them, just not above Jesus

is not worthy of me. Even the most honored relationships of father and mother must be secondary to discipleship. See the parallel passage in Luke 14:26 which Luke's uses the word "hate" which here means "love less."

Matt. 10:38 And whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.

And whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me Taking up your cross means following Jesus in absolute obedience. He is the model of radical obedience and self-denial (cf 4:1-11). Mounce writes, "Crucifixion was well known in Palestine. One of the Maccabean rulers crucified eight hundred Pharisees, and the Roman general Varus broke up the Jewish revolt, crucifying two thousand Jews along the roads leading to Galilee (Mounce, p. 101).

is not worthy of me Those who do not follow Him are not worthy of Him.

Matt. 10:39 The one who finds his life will lose it, and the one who loses his life for my sake will find it.

Note on a variant reading: Codex Sinaiticus does not have the phrase *The one who finds his life will lose it.*

The one who finds his life will lose it, Living life on his own self-centered terms. This person will not inherit the kingdom.

and the one who loses his life for my sake Loses his life for the sake of the Lord.

will find it. Those who follow Jesus have the promise of reward in the age to come (John 12:25). Discipleship is costly and some human relationships, even of the most intimate kind must not keep us from following Christ. The other half of the story is that we will receive rewards beyond calculation.

The Reception Of The Messengers Of Jesus (10:40-42)

Jesus speaks of the receiving His messengers and the rewards given to those who are faithful.

Matt. 10:40 He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me.

He who receives you receives me, Receive means to receive the message they bring.

and he who receives me receives him who sent me. Those who receive the message of Jesus receive God the Father. Again, you cannot have the Father without having the Son.

Matt. 10:41 He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophets reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.

Note on a variant reading: A couple of manuscripts do not have the phrase *and he who receives a righteous man in the name a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.*

He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet The person who receives a prophet as a prophet.

will receive a prophets reward; Stressing hospitality. Those who help the prophet will receive a similar reward. The context is in missionary proclamation of the message of Jesus.

and he who receives a righteous man Here Jesus is stating the same idea in a different way.

in the name a righteous man Name has the idea of accepting his status.

will receive a righteous man's reward. Same idea stated another way.

Matt. 10:42 And whoever will give to one of these little ones, only a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a disciple, truly I say to you, that he will not lose his reward.

And whoever will give to one of these little ones, Little ones are believers.

only a cup of cold water to drink The simplest of deeds.

in the name of a disciple, Because that person is a disciple.

truly I say to you, that he will not lose his reward God will reward their faithfulness.

Summary to Chapter 10

Chapter 10 has Jesus calling His disciples and then sending them out in the ministry. For the first time, we have the twelve disciples named. They are then sent out to proclaim the kingdom. They are told not to go to either the Gentiles or Samaritans but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. First, and foremost Jesus was sent as the Messiah to that nation. The Lord tells them how to act along the way. They are not to profit from the ministry but rather trust God for their needs. With the commissioning also comes a warning. Persecution will be their lot. The message will not be welcomed by everyone.

Jesus gives them instructions on how to respond to this hostility. He also says what the reward will be for those who rightfully treat His messengers.

**Matthew
Chapter 11**

After Jesus had finished commissioning the twelve He went on His own preaching and teaching mission. John the Baptist will send messengers to Him to find out if He truly is the Messiah or whether the people should expect someone else to come later. Jesus answers John's question as well as testifies concerning John's character. The Lord then deals with opposition to His ministry and pronounces judgment upon the cities that did not repent.

John The Baptist's Has Doubts About Jesus (11:1-3)

As John languishes in Herod's prison he begins to have doubts about Jesus.

Matt. 11:1 And it came about when Jesus finished commanding his twelve disciples, he departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.

And it came about when Jesus finished commanding his twelve disciples, In Matthew, unlike Mark (6:12-13,30) and Luke (9:6,10; cf. 10:17-20) there is no report of the fulfillment of the mission of the twelve or of their return from that mission.

He departed from there to teach and preach Matthew returns the focus to Jesus and His activities. Again the emphasis is on His teaching and preaching.

in their cities. These are the cities of Israel—the Jews as opposed to the Gentiles.

Matt. 11:2 Now when John heard in prison about the works of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples,

Note on a variant: Instead of *by His disciples* many manuscripts read *two of his disciples*.

Now when John heard in prison The forerunner of the Messiah has found himself in Herod's prison.

about the works of the Christ, Notice that Jesus is called here the Christ in this passage that deals with the question of John the Baptist.

he sent word by his disciples, John still has disciples after he told them to follow Jesus.

Matt. 11:3 and said to him, “Are you the Coming One, or shall we look for someone else?”

and said to him, “Are you the Coming One, A title for the Messiah (cf. 3:11; Hebrews 10:37; Revelation 1:4, 8; Acts 19:4; for Old Testament background: Psalm 118:26; Daniel 7:13; 9:25-27; Malachi 3:1).

or shall we look for someone else?” Why did John ask Jesus about His Messianic identity? John the Baptist had proclaimed the imminent coming of the kingdom, and had baptized Jesus the king, the one who would fulfill that promise. Now, well into the ministry of Jesus, he has doubters question about Jesus’ identity. His doubts are not unreasonable considering John preached the imminent end of the age involving the judgment of the wicked (3:12). Yet here he was in prison, not experiencing the Messianic promise of liberty to the captives (Isaiah 61:1, see also 42:7). He had to speak to Jesus through his disciples with his question. Since Jesus had not fulfilled John’s expectation of judgment on the enemies of God he wondered if he should be looking for someone else.

Jesus’ Reply To John (11:4-6)

Jesus will now send a message back to John by way of the deeds which He is performing.

Matt. 11:4 Jesus answered and said to them, **“Go back and report to John the things which you hear and see:**

Jesus answered and said to them, “Go back and report to John the things which you hear and see: Jesus will now provide the unmistakable evidence that He is the Messiah. He points to, “the things you are hearing and seeing” as Matthew has done in the gospel, to the words (chapters 5-7) and deeds (chapters 8,9) of Jesus, in that order.

Matt. 11:5 **the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are being evangelized.**

the blind received their sight, Almost the exact same language in Isaiah 29:18; cf 42:18; 35:5; Isaiah 35:6; See 9:27-31 for a previous example.

and the lame walk, See 9:1-8 for a previous example of Jesus healing the lame.

the lepers are cleansed Though this is not a specific Old Testament expectation it is implied in general statements Isaiah 53:4; see 8:1-4 for the healing of a leper.

and the deaf hear, See Isaiah 29:18; 35:5; cf 42:18. Matthew has already given one specific example of Jesus healing the deaf (9:32-34).

the dead are raised, Confer 9:18-26. There is similar language in Isaiah 26:19;

and the poor are being evangelized See 9:35 for Jesus evangelizing the poor. (Isaiah 61:1).

Matt. 11:6 **And blessed is he who is not offended because of me.**

And blessed is he who is not offended because of me. Jesus is implying that not everything will work out in accord with John's expectations. Jesus is not the kind of Messiah awaited for by John and the populace at large. This statement shows that there will be some who are offended with the nature of His Messiahship. John is meant to understand that Jesus is the promised one, but that the kingdom He is bringing is *not* one, for the present time, that will bring judgment upon the wicked (John 3:17). The personal consequences for John is that he will continue in prison and eventually die a martyr's death.

Jesus Testifies To John The Baptist (11:7-15)

The Lord now gives testimony to the character and ministry of John.

Matt. 11:7 While they were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John, "What did you go out to the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?"

While they were proceeding away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John, Jesus will now defend John before the people.

"What did you go out to the wilderness to look at?" He is going to ask the crowd this question three times.

A reed shaken by the wind? This suggests weakness and vacillation.

Matt. 11:8 But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, the ones wearing the soft clothing are in kings' houses.

But what did you go out to see? Same question repeated.

A man dressed in soft clothing? Fine clothing contrasted to John's ascetic attire.

Behold, the ones wearing the soft clothing are in kings' houses. The houses of kings are not in the wilderness where they came out to see John. He could be referring to one of the many houses that Herod had.

Matt. 11:9 What did you come out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

Note on a variant reading. In some the manuscripts the words *to see* and *a prophet* are transposed. Thus the translation would be either *What did you come out to see? A prophet?* or *"Why then did you go out? To see a prophet?"*

What did you come out to see? Repeated now for a third time.

A prophet? Had they come out to merely see a prophet in the wilderness?

Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. Luke 1:76 describes John as a prophet of the Most High. Jesus will spell out in the next verse the sense in which John was more than a prophet.

Matt. 11:10 This is the one about whom it is written, “Behold, I myself am sending my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.”

This is the one about whom it was written, His coming is a fulfillment of Scripture.

“Behold, I myself am sending my messenger before your face, This is quoting Malachi 3:1.

who will prepare your way before you.” John was sent to prepare the way of the Lord Himself.

Matt. 11:11 Truly, I say to you, “Among those born of women, there has not risen one who is greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is the least one in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

Truly, I say to you, “Among those born of women, This expression refers to humanity.

there has not risen one who is greater than John the Baptist; The point made in this verse depends upon the premise that John is a transitional figure between two ages; he is the climax of the old order; a prophet like those of the past but greater. From a human point of view no one greater than John has ever been born (of course with the exception of Jesus).

yet he who is the least one in the kingdom of heaven is greater than him.” This speaks of the greatness of the kingdom. The contrast is not between individuals but between eras.

Matt. 11:12 From the days of John until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent ones are taking it by force.

From the days of John until now, This could refer to the time Matthew wrote his gospel rather than to Jesus’ time.

the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent ones are taking it by force. This statement has been interpreted in a variety of ways. The difficulty arises because of two clauses, each of which can be taken positively or negatively. As a result there are four possible ways of understanding it.

(1) Both clauses can be understood positively “The kingdom of heaven is forcefully advancing and forceful people are taking it” (NIV).

(2) Both clauses can be understood negatively “The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent ones are taking it by force” (KJV, RSV ASV, NASB, NKJV, NRSV).

(3) The first clause can be understood positively and the second negatively “The kingdom of heaven is forcefully advancing and the violent ones are plundering it.”

(4) The first clause can be understood negatively and the second clause positively. “The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and forceful people are seizing it.”

The most natural way of understanding it is the reality of persecution and opposition to the kingdom of God.

The violent ones could be a reference to the zealots who were attempting to bring about a political kingdom for the Messiah instead of the type of realm which Jesus had come to bring.

Matt. 11:13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. John is the culmination of the law and the prophets.

Matt. 11:14 And if you are willing to accept it, he himself is Elijah, the one who is to come.

And if you willing to accept it, A degree of faith is required.

he himself is Elijah, the one who is to come. John functioned in the role of Elijah. Elijah himself will come before the day of judgment of God (Malachi 4:5) but this is not a time of judgment.

Matt. 11:15 He who has ears, let him hear!

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *to hear* after *He who has ears*.

He who has ears, let him hear! This formula, or one similar to it, is often used in contexts where difficult content is present (e.g. 13:9,43, Mark 4:9,23; Luke 8:8; 14:35; see Revelation 2:7,11,17).

John the Baptist is by definition at the turning point of the two ages. He was the last and greatest of the old prophets announcing the new kingdom and its Messiah.

The Crowd’s Reaction To Jesus (11:16-19)

Jesus now points out the fickleness of the multitudes.

Matt. 11:16 But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to the other children.

But to what shall I compare this generation? The phrase “this generation” often connotes unbelief (cf. 12:41,42, 45;) the disobedience and unbelief becomes explicit in 12:39; 16:4; and 17:17.

It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to the other children. Jesus compares them to children playing in the market place who call out to their friends for not joining them.

Matt. 11:17 saying, “We have played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we have sung a dirge, and you did not mourn.”

Note on a variant reading: After *sung a dirge* some manuscripts read *to you*

saying, “We have played the flute for you, This refers to playing a flute at a wedding.

and you did not dance; They refuse to respond. They refuse to respond.

we have sung a dirge, Or sing a dirge as in a funeral

and you did not mourn.” Still no response. In the same way Jesus’ contemporaries will have nothing to do with His messengers sent to them by God. Like the children, they refuse to participate in anything offered to them.

Matt. 11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’

For John came neither eating nor drinking, They rejected John because of his extreme asceticism (3:4;9:14; cf Luke 1:15).

and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ His intensity and demeanor made him seem possessed by those who were unreceptive. The same expression “he has a demon” is used of Jesus repeatedly in John 7:20; 8:48,52; 10:20. Jesus will be accused of driving out the demons by the ruler of the demons (12:24 and Mark 3:22).

Matt. 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.” And wisdom is justified from her deeds.

Note on a variant reading. Instead of *from her deeds* some manuscripts read *from her children*.

The Son of Man came eating and drinking In contrast Jesus was feasting not fasting.

and they say, “Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, This was because of His frequent attendance at banquets.

a friend of tax collectors and sinners.” He mingled with the lower class of society.

And wisdom is justified from her deeds. Unbelief is never satisfied. The deeds for which Jesus is being criticized will ultimately vindicate Him. John and Jesus, the central figures in the salvation being offered by God are rejected by the people. The mystery becomes even greater when, as the gospel proceeds, each is killed. According to the people's standards John is too holy; Jesus is not holy enough.

Judgment Pronounced On Unbelieving Cities (11:20-24)

Jesus now denounces the cities which did not receive Him.

Matt. 11:20 Then he began to denounce the cities in which the most of his miracles were done, because they did not repent.

Then he began to denounce the cities in which the most of his miracles were done, With the unbelief of Israel, a turning point in the narrative has now been reached. The message of Jesus has been rejected and now He begins to pronounce judgment upon those who were privileged to see His miracles.

because they did not repent. This indicates that the message of Jesus about the kingdom was accompanied from the beginning with a call to repentance.

Matt. 11:21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

"Woe to you, Chorazin! His first lament is against Chorazin, one of the cities in the vicinity of the sea of Galilee. Chorazin is only mentioned here in Matthew and the gospels provide no specific record of His activity there.

Woe to you Bethsaida! This was at the north end of the Sea of Galilee. It is the place where Jesus healed a blind man (Mark 8:22) and in Luke 9:10 as the place where Jesus spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and cured those who had need of healing. Despite the evidence given to them, these cities did not respond to Jesus, and thus were thus guilty.

For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, They are contrasted to the wicked cities of Tyre and Sidon who were judged by God. Sidon is one of the most ancient cities in the world (Genesis 10:15-19).

they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Sackcloth and ashes refer to the signs of sorrow for ones' sins. God knows the future, not only what will happen, but also all the things that might possibly happen (see 1 Samuel 23 with David and the men of Keilah).

Matt. 11:22 Nevertheless, I say to you, It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you.

Nevertheless, I say to you, A solemn statement.

It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. Again we have the teaching that there will be degrees of judgment depending upon the circumstances of the individual (see Luke 12:48).

Matt. 11:23 And you Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down into Hades. Because if the miracles had occurred in Sodom that occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.

Note on a variant readings. Instead of *And you Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven?* Some manuscripts read *And you Capernaum that are exalted to heaven* (KJV, NKJV).

Instead of *you will be brought down into Hades* some manuscripts read *you will go down to Hades*.

And you Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? Capernaum was the headquarters of Jesus' ministry (4:13; 8:5; 9:1; 17:24; cf. Mark 2:1). "Will you not be exalted to heaven" suggests Isaiah 14:13 and the fall of the king of Babylon. Behind the fall of the king of Babylon is the fall of the angel who became the Devil.

No, you will be brought down into Hades. Instead of exaltation, they will be brought down low to Hades—the unseen realm of the dead. This term is only used elsewhere in Matthew in 16:18.

Because if the miracles had occurred in Sodom that occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Sodom would have survived if they would have seen the same deeds.

Matt. 11:24 Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.

Nevertheless I say to you Another solemn statement.

that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you. Again stressing the degrees of judgment. This passage again illustrates the simple truth that the greater the revelation, the greater the accountability. In the day of judgment, Sodom and Gomorrah (the land of Sodom included Gomorrah) will fare better than Capernaum.

This brings up the issue of God knowing the future—the things that will occur and the things that might have occurred. Scripture is clear that God not only knows everything that will happen, he also knows everything that might potentially happen to us.

Jesus: The One Who Gives The Believers Rest (11:25-30)

The Lord thanks God the Father for revealing His will to the *humble* rather than to the arrogant.

Matt. 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of the Heaven and the Earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent, and you have revealed them unto children.

At that time This links the passage to the preceding lament concerning the unbelief of the people

Jesus answered and said, “I praise you, Father, The word translated “praise” is often translated in New Testament as “confess.”

Lord of the Heaven and the Earth,’ God’s sovereignty is in view.

because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, The proud and self-sufficient ones will not have the message revealed to them.

and you have revealed them unto children. Those who come in simple humble faith will be receivers of the message.

Matt. 11:26 Yes, O Father, because it seemed well-pleasing in your sight.

Yes, O Father, because it seemed well-pleasing in your sight. God’s purpose and will. The note of predestination cannot be missed but it must be read in light of the guilt of those who refused to believe (vss. 20-24).

Matt. 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wishes to reveal Him.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts change the word order of the phrase *neither anyone knows the Father except the Son* to *no one knows the Son except the Father*.

All things have been handed over to me by my Father; Jesus has absolute authority. It was handed over at some past time. This brings up the question of the eternal Sonship of Jesus. Was He always the Son, subject to the Father though equal in nature? Or did He become God the Son at His incarnation or coming to earth? See discussion at the end of the chapter for the various possibilities.

and no one knows the Son except the Father, Jesus also has a unique relationship with the Father.

nor anyone knows the Father except the Son, Jesus has a unique role between God the Father and mankind (see 1 Timothy 2:5).

and the one to whom the Son wishes to reveal him This is an astonishing statement. Jesus

chooses who will know the Father. All their wisdom will not help them unless the Son wishes to reveal the Father.

Matt. 11:28 Come unto me all who are laboring and burdened down, and I will give you rest.

Come unto me Previously Jesus had given an invitation to the disciples to “come after Me” (4:19) but only here in all the New Testament is the direct invitation to “come to Me.” The word translated “come” is an adverb used in animated invitations. It expresses lively interest on the part of the speaker, and invites one to come at once. “Me” is not emphatic in the sentence in Greek. Jesus instructs that He is the great teacher saying He alone has the knowledge.

all who are laboring and burdened down, He goes on further by saying “all” The ones laboring and burdened down are not yet His disciples. The Jewish teachers of that time promised rest based upon minute attention to the ceremonies of the written law and also the tradition of the elders. See Peter’s statement in Acts 15:10. See also 23:4.

and I will give you rest In Exodus 33:14 the Lord promises to give rest. Here Jesus call people to Himself to give them rest.

Matt. 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your souls.

Take my yoke upon you, The invitation is to follow Jesus in discipleship.

and learn from me, This is His own teaching as opposed to the teaching of the Pharisees and the tradition of the elders.

because I am gentle and humble of heart; Although He speaks with authority, Jesus comes humbly as a servant (see Isaiah 42:2,3; 53:1-12).

and you will find rest for your souls. Rest refers to salvation.

Matt. 11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. He takes the burden upon Himself. As later the New Testament will say, “His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

Summary To Chapter 11

Though John had spoken with conviction concerning the identity of Jesus, there came a time when he began to doubt the things that he had said. John sent some of his disciples to Jesus to ask Him about His identity. The probable reason for this doubt lay in the position where John found himself—in Herod’s prison.

Add to this, Jesus was not fulfilling John’s statements about the impending judgment. Instead of judgment, Jesus was speaking of God’s grace and

forgiveness to the people. John's understanding of the Messiah's role of judging the unbelievers was correct. However, this judgment will take place when Jesus comes the second time. Jesus dealt with John in a merciful manner. He pointed to the Old Testament prophecies concerning the miracles of healing, deliverance and restoration that would characterize the ministry of the Messiah. These pertained to His first coming.

Jesus emphasized that the ministry of the Messiah was being fulfilled. Jesus then defended John before the multitudes by pointing out that John had done his job as heralding the coming of the Messiah. John did not flatter people. He told the truth and that is why he landed in Herod's jail instead of his palace.

Therefore the people should take seriously what John had taught about repentance. They should not be like the children in the market place which could never be satisfied.

In the second section of this chapter (vs. 20-24) Jesus denounced the cities in which He had performed most of His mighty works because they did not repent. The lesson is that there will be degrees of judgment.

In contrast to the words of judgment, in the third section of this chapter (vs. 25-30) Jesus invites those who are weary to come to Him and He will give them rest.

**Matthew
Chapter 12**

Matthew records Jesus' confrontations with the religious leaders over Sabbath issues. The hostility will heat up to the place where they will ascribe His miracles to the power of the devil.

The First Sabbath Controversy: Picking Grain (12:1-8)

Jesus will now have a confrontation with the religious rulers over the Sabbath issue.

Matt. 12:1 At that time Jesus was going through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and his disciples became hungry and began to pluck and to eat the stalks of grain.

Note on a variant reading: After *pluck* a couple of manuscripts have *and rub them with their hands*.

At that time This transitional phrase ties this passage with the preceding argument concerning the kind of yoke and light burden of Jesus' teaching. The "rest" of Jesus will be compared with the rest of the Pharisees.

Jesus was going through the grainfields The grain is probably wheat.

on the Sabbath; Rest on the Sabbath was regarded as greatly important in Judaism (cf. Isaiah 56:4-7). The Sabbath was a time of rest and rejoicing (cf. the emphasis on rest in the preceding sentences, 11:28).

Matthew alternates between using the singular and plural for the Sabbath. The Greek word Sabbath can also mean *week* (see 28:1).

and his disciples became hungry This hunger will lead to a confrontation with the Pharisees.

and began to pluck and to eat the stalks of grain. Although Jesus did not engage in picking the grain Himself, He condoned their doing it and must be prepared to answer for their conduct.

Matt. 12:2 But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Behold, your disciples are doing that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath."

Note on variant readings: Instead of *this* some manuscripts read *them*. A few manuscripts do not have *on the Sabbath*.

But when the Pharisees saw this, Pharisees attempted to stop them. They saw this as a violation of commandment not to work on the Sabbath (cf. Deuteronomy 5:14; Exodus 20:10). Plucking grain was technically harvesting, a form of work forbidden in the rabbinical interpretation of the commandment.

they said to him, “Behold, your disciples are doing that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” Jesus and His disciples violated the tradition of the Pharisees and the sanctity of the Sabbath day.

Jesus will now give four distinct arguments to justify their behavior (1). vs. 3 (2). vs. 5. (3). vs. 7 (4). vs. 8.

Matt. 12:3 But he said to them, “Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry and those with him?”

But he said to them, “Have you not read Jesus, instead of rebuking His disciples, defended them. His first argument appeals to history and necessity.

what David did, when he became hungry, and those with him? The Pharisees would know the story well (1 Samuel 21:1-5).

Matt. 12:4 How he entered into the house of God, and they ate the bread of the Presence, that which was not lawful for him to eat, nor the ones with him, but only for the priests?

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *he ate* rather than *they ate*.

How he entered into the house of God, and they ate the bread of the Presence, The Pharisees believed David and his companions ate the bread to stay alive though nothing in the context suggests this.

that which was not lawful for him to eat, nor the ones with him, Admission that David violated the law.

but only for the priests? If David could do it, certainly the greater Son of David could do it.

Matt. 12:5 Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath, the priests in the temple desecrate the Sabbath, and they are innocent?

Or have you not read in the Law, Again appealing to Scripture.

that on the Sabbath, the priests in the temple desecrate the Sabbath, and they are innocent? His second argument is from the Law (Numbers 28:9, 10, 18, 19). The priests performed work on the Sabbath in that they offered sacrifices.

Matt. 12:6 But I say to you, that one greater than the temple is here.

But I say to you, Here again is the authority of Jesus.

that one greater than the temple is here. Some translations have “*something* greater” rather than “someone” or “one” greater based upon the Greek text which has the word in the neuter gender. Jesus is greater than David and the temple.

Matt. 12:7 But if you had known what it means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.

But if you had known what it means, Obviously they did not know. Jesus’ third point draws from the statement of a prophet. Implies that if they knew the meaning of the passage, they would have acted according to it.

‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ Hosea 6:6 is where this is found. Though God commanded sacrifices it is not the mere act that pleased Him, it was what was behind the act. This is true in any religious duty.

you would not have condemned the innocent. Condemning the innocent: first John the Baptist the messenger then eventually the king Himself will be condemned.

Matt. 12:8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. His fourth defense is that they acted under the Master’s authority. He is greater than the temple and Lord of the Sabbath. That is He is sovereign to decide what loyalty to the Sabbath means.

The religious restrictions that human beings put on the laws of God ultimately fight the very purpose that these laws were given. Insistence on the letter of the law results in the neglect with the Spirit of the Law. Jesus brings the debate to an entirely new level by proclaiming He is Lord of these matters and He is the final and infallible interpreter of the Law and the commandment about the Sabbath. The rest and rejoicing symbolized by the Sabbath finds its fulfillment brought in by the kingdom of Jesus.

Another Sabbath Controversy: The Man With the Shriveled Hand (12:9-14)

Jesus has another confrontation on the Sabbath. This one deals with whether or not a person can do good on the Sabbath.

Matt. 12:9 And after departing from there, he went into their synagogue.

And after departing from there, he went into their synagogue. Note it is “their” synagogue. This could indicate that the synagogue was specifically of Pharisees or one in the vicinity of the last event. We are still on the Sabbath day. Luke 6:6 says it is a different Sabbath.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts read *Jesus went* instead of *He went*.

Matt. 12:10 And behold, there was a man having a shriveled hand. And they questioned him saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath”—in order that they might accuse him.

Note on variant readings: Many manuscripts read *the man* instead of *a man*. After *man* some manuscripts have *there*. One Syriac manuscript does not have *on the Sabbath*.

Instead of *to heal* many manuscripts read *to be healing*.

And behold, there was a man having a shriveled hand. Luke 6:6 tells us that it was his right hand. Shriveled has the idea of being paralyzed and atrophied. This was probably a situation that had been set up by the religious rulers.

And they questioned him saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath,” The question was to trap Him. It is clear that the Pharisees did not believe that it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. From their point of view, a man who had a shriveled hand for some time could wait one more day to be healed.

—in order that they might accuse him.” The accusation would be before the local tribunal.

Matt. 12:11 But he said to them, “What man will there be among you who will have one sheep, and if this one falls into the ditch on the Sabbath, will he not seize it, and raise it up?”

Note on variant readings: Instead of *will there be* some manuscripts read *is*. A few manuscripts do not have *will there be*. A few manuscripts read *has* instead of *will have*. A few manuscripts do not have *this one*.

But he said to them, “What man will there be among you who will have one sheep, and if this one falls into the ditch on the Sabbath, will he not seize it, and raise it up?” Jesus will justify the healing by referring to the acceptability of pulling an animal out of a pit it had fallen into on the Sabbath (cf. Luke 14:5). He appeals not to Scripture but to normal human conduct.

Matt. 12:12 Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

Note on a variant reading: After *value* some manuscripts have *then*.

Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! The emphasis is that a human being is worth more than a sheep. Again Jesus appeals to common sense.

So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Jesus does not challenge the Sabbath law, just their interpretation of it. It *is* permissible to do good on the Sabbath.

Matt. 12:13 Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out and it was restored to normal, just as the other one.

Note on a variant reading: Two manuscripts including *Sinaiticus*, do not have *just as the other one*.

Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out and it was restored to normal, just as the other one. After Jesus indicated the deed was proper to perform, He immediately healed the man. They were silenced by His argument and baffled by His action.

Matt. 12:14 And the Pharisees went out and formed a plot against him, how that they might destroy him.

Note on variant readings: Many manuscripts read *went out from him*. A few manuscripts do not have *went out*.

And the Pharisees went out and formed a plot against him, Their obsession with the letter of the law apparently made it impossible for them to think about anything else. Thus the miracle of Jesus that was a sign of the dawning of God’s kingdom and of the truth of Jesus message was lost on them. This event probably happened two years before the crucifixion.

how that they might destroy him. The breaking of the Sabbath was *the* incident that would eventually lead to His death. The same charge laid against Him in John 5:16-18 with the same result— wanting His death.

What a reproach against human nature, to see men maintaining that it was a mortal sin to heal on the Sabbath day, and yet they foully plotted on that same sacred day how that they might destroy the innocent teacher and healer!

Jesus Withdraws From Potential Hostility (12:15-21)

With the religious leaders wishing to kill Him, Jesus withdraws from their presence.

Matt. 12:15 But Jesus knowing this, departed from there. And a great multitude followed after him, and He healed all of them.

Note on a textual variant: A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*) do not have the word *multitude* after *great*. One manuscript does not have *great*.

But Jesus knowing this, departed from there. His time had not yet come (see John 7) He wanted to avoid further contact with them for the time being.

And a great multitude followed after him, and he healed all of them. Though rejected by the nation and the religious leaders, He is still healing everyone and multitudes are following Him everywhere.

Matt. 12:16 And he warned them not to make him known.

And he warned them not to make him known. He had not come as the triumphal Messiah who would establish a political kingdom but rather as a servant of the Lord accomplishing His will.

Matt. 12:17 in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying,

in order that what was spoken. through Isaiah the prophet The answer to His demand for their silence is found in the prophecy of Isaiah.

might be fulfilled, saying, Another one of Matthew's fulfillment quotations

Matt. 12:18 "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; my Beloved one in whom my soul is well-pleased; I will place my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; Jesus here is the chosen servant. The word can be translated "servant" or "son."

my Beloved one in whom my soul is well-pleased; This recalls the words of God the Father at His baptism (3:17;) and the transfiguration (17:5).

I will place my Spirit upon him, Again reminiscent of Jesus baptism when the Spirit of God anointed Him for the public ministry.

and he will proclaim justice to the nations. That the word translated *justice* should be taken in the positive sense rather than negative judgment seems clear from verse 21.

Matt. 12:19 He will not quarrel, nor cry out; nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.

He will not quarrel, This word, which is not found in the text of Isaiah, could be translated "argue" or "wrangle." Matthew understands these words to speak of the humility of Jesus the servant Messiah. He does not quarrel with the Pharisees but withdraws from their midst.

nor cry out; The word translated cry out can be used for the barking of a dog. This could be contrasting His voice with the hypocrites who stand and pray in a public area (6:5).

nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. Those whom He heals will not proclaim Him publicly.

Matt. 12:20 A bruised reed he will not break off, and a smoldering wick he will not extinguish, until he leads justice to victory.

Note on variant readings: One manuscript does not have *a bruised reed*. After *justice* a few manuscripts read *His*.

A bruised reed he will not break off, This is some question to the exact meaning of this phrase. It may mean He will not crush His enemies. This could also refer to those who have been worn down by the difficulties of life.

and a smoldering wick he will not extinguish, His purpose is not to overwhelm those who disagree with Him.

until he leads justice to victory. This means He will be successful. Again we are made aware of the paradoxical ministry of Jesus Messiahship. He is powerful in word and deed and yet the essence of His ministry, is found not in power but rather in servanthood expressed through humility and meekness, and gentleness. The story of Jesus that Matthew narrates is the same portrait that Isaiah gives.

Matt. 12:21 And in his name the Gentiles will hope.

And in his name the Gentiles will hope. Note that salvation going to the Gentiles is now stressed after the Jews reject Him. He is the Savior of the entire world.

Jesus Exorcises The Demons (12:22-23)

Jesus again exorcises the demons.

Matt. 12:22 Then there was brought to him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and he healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *the mute and blind man* instead of *the mute man*.

Then there was brought to him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, This episode will be the first public accusation against Jesus and the authority which He possesses. The man is brought to Jesus because they knew that He would heal him. Even in their unbelief they are testifying to His power!

and he healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. Jesus obliges and heals the man. This is the only instance recorded in the four gospels of Jesus healing someone who is blind and mute.

Matt. 12:23 And all the multitude was amazed, and began to say, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?"

And all the multitudes were amazed, and began to say, Again the amazement of Jesus' healing powers.

"This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" The multitudes ask the question in front of the religious rulers. They began to wonder if Jesus is the Messiah.

The Accusation Of The Pharisees And The Response Of Jesus (12:24-37)

The Pharisees accuse Jesus of driving out the demons by Satan's power. He answers their accusations.

Matt. 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This one does not drive out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.”

But the Pharisees after hearing this said, They feel they have to respond.

“This one does not drive out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.” The power of Jesus is attributed to the devil. They feel that the claim of Jesus being the Messiah is impossible so they come to the opposite conclusion of the crowd.

Matt. 12:25 And knowing their thoughts he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is made desolate; and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.

Note on a textual variant: Some manuscripts have *Jesus* before *knowing*. Some manuscripts read *Jesus perceiving* instead of *knowing*.

And knowing their thoughts he said to them, Jesus supernaturally knows their thoughts.

“Every kingdom divided against itself is made desolate; He gives the analogy of a kingdom divided.

and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. Same analogy applied to a city or house.

Matt. 12:26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?

And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? The concept of Satan having a kingdom is found only explicitly here in the New Testament and in the parallel passages in the gospels (but see Revelation 2:13).

Matt. 12:27 And if I drive out the demons by Beelzebub, by whom are your sons driving them out? Therefore they themselves will be your judges.

And if I drive out the demons by Beelzebub, Now a second argument is given. “If” is for sake of argument. Jesus is not saying that He is casting out demons by Beelzebub.

by whom are your sons driving them out? *Sons* means those associated with them, not their literal children.

Therefore they themselves will be your judges. To condemn Jesus is to condemn their own exorcists.

Matt. 12:28 But if I drive out the demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

But if I drive out the demons by the Spirit of God, If, on the other hand, He is doing it by God's Spirit.

then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Then the kingdom has arrived. The issue is: Not can He drive out demons, the issue is where does His authority come from?

Matt. 12:29 Or how is anyone able to enter into the house of the strong man and plunder his goods, except first he binds the strong man? And then he will thoroughly plunder his house.

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts have *thoroughly plunder his goods* rather than *plunder his goods*. Some manuscripts read *may plunder*.

Or how is anyone able to enter into the house of the strong man The strong man stands for Satan.

and plunder his goods, The coming of God's kingdom spells the defeat for Satan and his demons (1 John 3:8).

except first he binds the strong man? He first must neutralize him.

And then he will thoroughly plunder his house. Then Jesus will destroy his kingdom.

Matt. 12:30 He who is not with me is against me; and he who is not gathering together with me scatters.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) have *me* after *scatters*.

He who is not with me is against me; A general truth.

and he who is not gathering together with me scatters. People must choose up sides.

Matt. 12:31 Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

Note on variant readings: A few manuscripts (including *Vaticanus*) have *to you* before *men*. After *not be forgiven* many manuscripts read *to men*. A couple of manuscripts read *to him* after *not be forgiven*.

Therefore I say to you, Now Jesus is going to make a very solemn statement.

every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. There is an unpardonable sin.

Matt. 12:32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the age to come.

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Vaticanus* reads *not* before *forgiven him*. Instead of *not be forgiven*, *Codex Sinaiticus* reads *no, not ever, will be forgiven*. *Codex Vaticanus* reads *no, not ever, might be forgiven* (the strongest way of saying it).

And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, Forgiveness is possible when speaking against Jesus.

it will be forgiven him See Peter's denial of Jesus and eventual restoration.

but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, In this context, attributing the work of God to Satan.

it will not be forgiven him, No forgiveness for that person.

either in this age, or in the one to come. Now or in the future. This does not imply, as some have wrongly concluded, that there will be forgiveness in the age to come for those who have not been forgiven in this age. This is the position of Roman Catholic theology.

From the statements of Jesus we learn the following concerning the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit:

1. The sin was against the Holy Spirit. The accusation made by the Pharisees was not only against Christ; ultimately it was against the Holy Spirit who was performing the miracles through Christ.
2. Those who sin against Jesus can be forgiven. But sinning against the Holy Spirit, who personifies the power of God, is unforgivable. There could be no question that the miracle had been through the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who attribute the Holy Spirit's work to Satan cannot expect to be forgiven.
3. The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is more than one particular sin; it is a continuous state of being. The religious leaders were constantly attributing the works of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to the devil. This revealed the evil condition of their hearts.
4. The consequences of blaspheming the Holy Spirit meant eternal damnation. There could be no forgiveness in this life or in eternity.

Matt. 12:33 Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known from its fruit.

Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; Same point as 7:17.

or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; One will automatically produce the other

for the tree is known from its fruit. In this context it refers to good and bad speaking.

Matt. 12:34 You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, say good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth is speaking.

Note on a variant reading: Two manuscripts read *good things* after *speaking*.

You brood of vipers, See 3:7; 23:33 for this same phrase. It is only aimed at the religious leaders.

how can you, being evil, say good things? The Pharisees were described as being evil (see 7:11). Therefore their estimate of Jesus was wrong.

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth is speaking. The mouth says what is already in the heart.

Matt. 12:35 The good man out of his good treasure brings forth good things, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings out evil things.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *from his heart* after *good things* and again after *evil things*. A few manuscripts have *the* before *good things*. A few manuscripts have *the* before *evil things*.

The good man out of his good treasure That which is contained in the heart (see Luke 6:45).

brings forth good things, A natural result of his character.

and the evil man Likewise the evil man does the same thing.

out of his evil treasure This is the one with an evil heart.

brings out evil things. See Romans 8:6,7.

Matt. 12:36 For I say unto you, that every careless word that men will speak, they will give an account on the day of judgment.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *will speak* many manuscripts read *if they will speak*. One manuscript reads *they are speaking*.

For I say unto you, that every careless word that men will speak, Useless or worthless words are what is in view.

they will give an account on the day of judgment. They will have to be answered for what they have done.

Matt. 12:37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

For by your words you will be justified, There is a change from second person plural to second person singular.

and by your words you will be condemned. Words, like deeds are indications of a person's discipleship.

The Sign Of Jonah (12:38-42)

Jesus predicts His resurrection with the sign of Jonah the prophet.

Matt. 12:38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts do not have *Him*. *Codex Vaticanus* does not have *and Pharisees*.

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him saying, This is part of the continuing exchange between Jesus and the religious leaders.

"Teacher, we want to see a sign from you." They wanted to see another miracle. Presumably a miracle just performed for them. Notice that again they refer to Him as teacher.

Matt. 12:39 And he answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation is seeking after a sign; but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet

And he answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation is seeking after a sign Not exactly said to win friends, but nevertheless the truth.

but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet Notice Jesus believed that Jonah was a prophet.

Matt. 12:40 for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, in this manner will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *was* a couple of manuscripts have another Greek word that means *it happened* or *was*. One manuscript does not have the word *was* in the text. After *in this manner* some manuscripts read *also*.

for just as Jonah was Notice also that Jesus believed the story of Jonah and the sea monster.

three days and three nights This is according to Jewish reckoning

in the belly of the sea monster, The Greek word, like the Hebrew, means “large sea monster,” not necessarily a whale.

in this manner will the Son of Man be Like Jonah, so Jesus.

three days and three nights Three days according to their reckoning. It does not have to be a full 72 hours because any part of a day was considered to be one day.

in the heart of the earth. This stood for the realm of the dead or *Sheol*. The sign will be His resurrection.

Matt. 12:41 The men of Nineveh will stand up against this generation at the judgment and they will condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, someone greater than Jonah is here.

The men of Nineveh will stand up against this generation at the judgment and they will condemn it, These Gentiles responded where the Jews did not.

because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, They repented at the preaching of a Jewish prophet.

and behold, someone greater than Jonah is here. One greater than a prophet has come to the Jews and given them signs, yet they, the chosen people, still refuse to believe.

We note the following contrasts between the men of Nineveh and the people of Jesus’ day.

1. The Son of God or a simple human messenger. Jesus was God’s Son who called them to repentance while the people of Nineveh were sent a human prophet—Jonah.

2. The sinless Savior or a rebellious prophet. Jesus, the messenger, was the sinless Son of God. Contrast this with the foolish and rebellious Jonah who ran away from God’s calling (Jonah 1:3; 4:1-3,9b).

3. A message of salvation and grace or condemnation and judgment. Jesus message was one of salvation, grace, and forgiveness while the message of Jonah consisted of judgment with no word about grace or the possibility of repentance.

4. Signs that confirmed the message or the word of the prophet alone. Jesus backed up His message by a sufficient number of miracles as well as fulfilling prophecy. Jonah performed no miracles.

5. People who had spiritual advantages compared to those who had none. The message of Jesus came to the Jews who were in an advantageous position having the word of God already given to them. Jonah addressed a group of people who had none of the tradition and history of the Jews.

The people of Nineveh received Jonah's prophetic message of doom and repented. Yet with all the advantages the Jews had they rejected Jesus' message of grace and forgiveness. This is why they will condemn the evil generation that rejected Jesus.

Matt. 12:42 The Queen of the South will rise up against this generation in the judgment and she will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, one greater than Solomon is here.

The Queen of the South will rise up in judgment against this generation Another Gentile is highlighted by Matthew.

and she will condemn it Like Nineveh the Queen of Sheba will testify against this generation.

because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, She came to Solomon rather than Solomon coming to her.

and behold, one greater than Solomon is here. One who is greater than the great king.

We can also make a comparison between the Queen of Sheba and the people of Jesus' day.

1. Truth came to them versus seeking the truth. Jesus came to His own (John 1:12) as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. The word of God was right there in their presence. On the other hand, the Queen of Sheba endured the hardships of a long journey (approximately 1,200 miles) to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

2. A wise king or the wisest King. The Queen of Sheba came to listen to a wise man who taught the wisdom of God. The people in Jesus' day had God Himself teach them the truth.

3. Giving or Taking. The Queen of Sheba gave a large part of her wealth to Solomon as a reflection of her thankfulness for what she learned. The people of Jesus' day gave Him nothing, rather they took His life.

4. Spiritual advantages or disadvantages. Like the people of Nineveh, the Queen of Sheba was in a spiritually disadvantaged state, yet she found her way to Solomon. With all the advantages the Jews had, including the Scripture in front of them, they still refused to accept Jesus and His message.

5. Invitation versus own initiative. The people of Jesus' day were invited to come to Him and believe His message. There is no indication that the Queen of Sheba was invited to visit Solomon.

6. Objective evidence or simple testimony. He backed up His claims with miracles and fulfilled prophecy.

With all this going for them, the people of Jesus refused to believe in Him while the Queen of Sheba came and listened to the message of Solomon.

The Return Of The Evil Spirit (12:43-45)

Jesus gives a parable of an evil spirit returning to where it came from.

Matt. 12:43 Now when the unclean spirit comes out from the man, it passes through the waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it.

Now when the unclean spirit comes out from the man, Refers to a demon spirit that has been exorcised.

it passes through the waterless places, seeking rest, What are the waterless places

and does not find it. This statement seems to prove that a demon *cannot* enter into anyone he desires.

Matt. 12:44 Then it says, 'I will return into my house from where I came out.' And when it comes it will find it unoccupied, swept clean, and put in order.'

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *the house* instead of *it*. A few manuscripts including *Sinaiticus* have *and* before *swept clean*.

Then it says, 'I will return into my house from where I came out.' And when it comes it will find it unoccupied, swept clean, and put in order.' It is not the same as when it left it.

Matt. 12:45 Then it goes, and takes along with it seven spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last condition of that man becomes worse than the first. This is the way it will be with this evil generation.

Then it goes, and takes along with it seven spirits more evil than itself, More evil spirits join.

and they go in and live there They live with the man.

and the last condition of that man becomes worse than the first. This is the way it will be with this evil generation. The nation will be worse off because of their rejection of Jesus.

Jesus And His Family (12:46-50)

The family of Jesus wants to see Him. Jesus responds by telling the multitudes who His true family is.

Matt. 12:46 While he was still speaking to the crowd, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with him.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *seeking to speak with Him*, a couple of manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) have *of His disciples*.

While he was still speaking to the crowd, This now occurs as He is speaking.

behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with him. His mother, brothers, and sisters will come up again in 13:56. Notice no father.

Matt. 12:47 And a certain one said to him, “Behold, your mother and your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak with you.”

Note on a textual variant: Some manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*) do not have this verse.

And a certain one said to him, “Behold Your mother and your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak with you.” Now Jesus is told of His family waiting for Him.

Matt. 12:48 He answered and said to the one speaking to him, “Who is my mother and who are my brothers?”

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Vaticanus* reads *brothers* not *My brothers*.

He answered and said to the one speaking to him, “Who is my mother and who are my brothers?” Who is His real family?

Matt. 12:49 And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Behold, my mother and my brothers.

Note on a variant reading: A couple of manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) do not have *His*.

And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Behold, my mother and my brothers. Believers have closer ties than blood relatives.

Matt. 12:50 For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he himself is my brother and my sister and my mother.”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *whoever does* or *may do* one manuscript reads *is doing*. Some manuscripts read *will do*.

For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he himself is my brother and my sister and my mother.” The family of God is a spiritual family, not based upon physical relationships.

Summary to Chapter 12

Jesus promised rest to all those who would come to Him (11:28-30). In the first section (vss. 1-14) He reveals that those who receive Him and His

teaching will be free of man-made regulations (like those imposed for the Sabbath). On a particular Sabbath His hungry disciples picked a few heads of grains while walking through the grain fields. The Pharisees, who were watching them closely, blamed Jesus for His disciples violation of the Sabbath traditions. Jesus went through a point by point rejection of their argument declaring Himself to be Lord of the Sabbath. Indeed, on the Sabbath He heals a man with a shriveled hand. He reasons that if they could rescue a sheep who had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath, it is much more important to help a man in need. The reaction of the Pharisees was to form a plot to put Him to death. Though Jesus performed this and other great miracles, it was not His desire to be known merely as a miracle worker. As the next section of Matthew reveals (15-21) Jesus is the Chosen Servant who is humble in nature.

The next section (22-37) finds another needy person brought to Jesus—a demon-possessed man who could not see or speak. Jesus performed a triple miracle on him causing the people to ask aloud if He indeed was the Messiah. The Pharisees gave their authoritative answer—not only was Jesus not the Messiah, His power to drive out the demons came from the ruler of the demons. Jesus responded by showing the absurdity of their argument and warned them and others of committing the unpardonable sin—the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

We find the Pharisees representing the denunciation of Jesus (vs. 38-45) and in partnership with the scribes, they asked Jesus to show them a sign. Jesus told them the only sign they would receive would be that of the prophet Jonah—Jesus' resurrection from the dead on the third day. Jesus went to say that the people of Nineveh will condemn these religious leaders on the day of judgment seeing that they repented as a result of Jonah's preaching—one who is less in stature than the person they are plotting to kill. Like the man with the evil spirit who later becomes possessed with seven other spirits, the Jewish people are descending further into condemnation by following the lead of the scribes and Pharisees in renouncing Jesus. The final part of this chapter deals with the attempt of his mother and brothers to see Him. This gives Jesus the occasion to reveal who His genuine family is—those who do the will of God.

**Matthew
Chapter 13**

Chapter 13 marks a transition in the ministry of Jesus—the parables of the kingdom. The kingdom has been rejected by the people and Jesus now begins to speak about the things of His kingdom to His disciples, not to the multitudes. The Galilean part of Jesus’ ministry will come to an end and Jesus will then move to Judea, toward the cross.

The Parable Of The Sower (13:1-9)

The first parable that Jesus gives is the parable of the sower and the four soils upon which the seed is sown.

Matt. 13:1 On that day Jesus went out of the house, and was sitting alongside the sea.

Note on variant readings: Many manuscripts read *from the house* while others have *Jesus went out, out of the house*. Three manuscripts do not have the phrase *of the house*.

On that day This is the same day that His relatives tried to reach Him (12:46).

Jesus went out of the house, and was sitting alongside the sea. After a while, on the same day, He walked to the seaside and sat down there.

Matt. 13:2 And a great multitude gathered together around him, so that he stepped into a boat to sit down, and all the crowd stood upon the shore.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *a boat* many manuscripts have *the boat*.

And a great multitude gathered together around him, The great crowds gathered facing Him.

so that he stepped into a boat to sit down, Because of their size, He stepped into a boat. In typical Oriental manner, Jesus sat down to teach.

and all the crowd stood upon the shore. The crowd stood to listen upon the shore.

Matt. 13:3 And he spoke to them many things in parables, saying, “Behold, the sower came out to sow;

Note on a variant reading: After *to sow* a few manuscripts have *his seed*.

And he spoke to them many things in parables, saying, Many things probably means there were more parables than the ones recorded for us.

“Behold, Matthew’s favorite word.

the sower came out to sow; This first parable is one about the man who sows seeds. The emphasis is on the different soils rather than the sower.

Matt. 13:4 and while he was sowing, some seeds fell alongside the road, and the birds came and ate them up.

Note on a variant reading: After *birds* some manuscripts have *of the sky*. Some manuscripts do not have *and* before *ate*.

and while he was sowing, some seeds fell alongside the road, The entire description is typical of the Holy Land. The wheat or barley is sown by hand. The area of sowing is small and unfenced. Along its side runs a path which may serve as a dividing line between a similar patch of ground. While the sowing occurs, some of the seed may fall at the side of the path.

and the birds came and ate them up. This seed is not covered up and thus it is eaten by the birds.

Matt. 13:5 And others fell upon the rocky places, where it did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil.

And others fell upon the rocky places, where it did not have much soil; Much of the holy land consists of rocky elevations. The rock underneath the soil comes close to the surface and has only a thin covering of soil. These are the rocky places that do not have sufficient earth.

and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. The seed sprouts quickly because of the underlying rock and the warmth of the soil.

Matt. 13:6 And when the sun came up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Note on a variant reading: A couple of manuscripts have *depth of root* instead of *no root*.

And when the sun came up, they were scorched; The hot sun burns the seed and it dries up before it has attained a sufficient root.

and because they had no root, they withered away. Because it has not root it withers.

Matt. 13:7 And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns rose up and choked them.

And others fell among the thorns, Other spots are infested with thorns which escaped the plow.

and the thorns rose up and choked them. After the seed is sown, the thorns shoot up new growth amidst the grain. The grain is soon choked by the thorns.

Matt. 13:8 But other seeds fell upon the good soil, and were continually bearing fruit, some one hundred times, some sixty, and some thirty.

But other seeds fell upon the good soil, and were continually bearing fruit, some one hundred times, some sixty, and some thirty. The fourth type of soil is the good earth. This is the only type of soil that bears any fruit. The various grains that are sown produce different amounts of fruit. The fruit is continually being borne as stressed by the Greek imperfect tense (i.e. continuous action in past time).

Matt. 13:9 He who has ears, let him hear.

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *to hear* after *ears*.

He who has ears let him hear. The parable ends with a call for the hearers to use their ears. The implication is that the narrative about the seed has a hidden meaning.

The Purpose For Speaking In Parables (13:10-17)

Jesus will now explain why He speaks to the people in parables.

Matt. 13:10 And his disciples came and said to him, “Why are you speaking to them in parables?”

And his disciples came and said to him, “Why are you speaking to them in parables?” There may have been an interval of time before His disciples came and asked Him this question. They wanted to know why Jesus was using parables and what the first parable meant.

Matt. 13:11 And he answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it has not been given.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) do not have *to them* after *said*.

And he answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, Mysteries are “sacred secrets.” We cannot know them by our own nature and abilities.

but to them it has not been given.” The understanding of them must be given by God through the preaching and teaching of the gospel of the kingdom.

Matt. 13:12 For whoever has, more will be given to him, and it will be increased. Whoever does not have, even that which he has will be taken away from him.

For whoever has, more will be given to him, The one who has accepted the kingdom will understand.

and it will be increased. He will continue to receive understanding.

Whoever does not have, even that which he has will be taken away from him. Likewise the one who does not receive the kingdom will lose whatever they had. This probably includes his natural sense of fairness and justice. For example, behind the healing of the demoniacs the religious leaders thought they saw Beelzebub (12:24).

Matt. 13:13 Therefore I speak to them in parables; because seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not hear or understand.

Note on a variant reading: A small number of manuscripts does not have *to them*. One manuscript has *He is speaking* instead of *I speak*.

Therefore I speak to them in parables; For the reason stated.

because seeing, they do not perceive, They see with their physical eyes, but they do not perceive.

and hearing they do not hear or understand. They hear but don't comprehend.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *might not understand* instead of *do not understand*. Other manuscripts have *might not perceive* instead of *do not perceive*.

Matt. 13:14 And the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled among them which said, "You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; and you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive."

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *is fulfilled* a few manuscripts read *will be fulfilled*. Before *you will keep* a few manuscripts have *go and say to this people* (see Isaiah 6:9).

And the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled among them which said, Isaiah's prophecy explains their lack of comprehension.

"You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; They hear physically but not spiritually.

and you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive." Same thought with the seeing.

Matt. 13:15 For the heart of this people has become callused, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn and I would heal them.'

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts *have ears* rather than *their ears*.

For the heart of this people has become callused, It has the idea of being unresponsive.

and with their ears they scarcely hear, They're hard of hearing.

and they have closed their eyes, They deliberately shut their eyes. This description is true of the great majority of the nation when Jesus came.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes. They are determined not to see so they are spiritually blind.

and hear with their ears, They do not want to hear. It is *their* choice.

and understand with their heart, Consequently they do not understand. They are like the first three types of soil in which the seed was sown—they did not understand the word.

and turn and I would heal them.' The Jews acted as if the greatest problem for them would be if they had to turn to God for healing (in this instance it is spiritual healing).

Matt. 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

Note on a variant reading: A couple of manuscripts (including *Vaticanus*) read *ears* not *your ears*. Instead of *they hear* a few manuscripts read *they may hear*.

But blessed are your eyes, *Your* is emphatic in Greek. It puts great stress on the contrast between those who have not responded to the message of the gospel referred to in the previous quotation, and those who have—namely the disciples (cf. vs. 10). Their ears and eyes are described as blessed. Same word *blessed* as 5:3 in the Beatitudes.

because they see; The disciples of Jesus are contrasted to the others who do not see. They are not spiritually blind.

and your ears, They are spiritually in tune.

because they hear. They are also hearing and understanding.

Matt. 13:17 For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see and they did not see, and to hear what you hear, and they did not hear.

Note on a variant reading: One manuscript has *they were unable to see* rather than *they did not see*.

For truly I say to you, Jesus now explains why they are greatly blessed.

that many prophets and righteous men The great men of the Old Testament.

longed to see what you see and they did not see, Though they may have received great things from God, they did not see His Christ.

and they did not see, Jesus was made known to them from promises, shadows, types, etc.

and to hear what you hear, Some did occasionally hear God's voice.

and they did not hear. They did not continually hear the voice of God's Son.

Jesus Interprets The Parable Of The Sower (13:18-23)

This parable is now interpreted by Jesus.

Matt. 13:18 You yourselves listen the parable of the sower.

You yourselves listen the parable of the sower" *You* is emphatic in Greek. They are to hear with the knowledge it is intended to convey.

Matt. 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the one which was sown along the road.

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, The ones who hear with their physical ears, like the three types of soil in the parable.

and does not understand it, The failure to understand according to the context results from the hard-heartedness and unreceptive attitude of the hearers (cf. verses 13-15) rather from the inadequacy of the communication of the message itself. Those who do not receive the message do not understand it.

the evil one comes Satan.

and snatches away This is the same Greek word used for "rapture" *harpazo*.

what was sown in his heart. The word does not remain in his heart

This is the one which was sown along the road. This is the first of the four types of soil.

Matt. 13:20 And that which is sown upon the rocky places, this is the one, who after hearing the word, immediately receives it with joy,

And that which is sown upon the rocky places, The second type of soil.

this is the one, who after hearing the word, As soon as he hears it.

immediately receives it with joy, This leads us to expect great things from this individual.

Matt. 13:21 yet he does not have root in himself, but is only temporary. When trouble or persecution come because of the word, immediately he falls away.

yet he does not have root in himself, But there is no foundation. Something is wrong from the start.

but is only temporary, He is temporary, only around for a season. Luke tells us that he believes for a while but his belief is only temporary (see John 2:23, 8:31,44).

When tribulation When pressure is exerted upon him.

or persecution come because of the word, His faith is the cause of the persecution. Note that the shining sun is used here to represent tribulation and persecution.

immediately he falls away. He is offended by what happens to him.

Matt. 13:22 And that which is sown among the thorns, this the one, who after hearing the word, the anxiety of this age, and the deceit of riches chokes the word and it becomes unfruitful.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*) read *age* not *this age*.

And that which is sown among the thorns, The third type of soil.

this the one, who after hearing the word, This is the one which sprouts up quickly.

the anxiety of this age, The worry of the times. This refers to worldly concerns and interests as opposed to heavenly concerns.

and the deceit This word can mean seductiveness, deceitfulness, or pleasure (see 2 Peter 2:13).

of riches Wealth can deceive people into trusting it rather than God (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

chokes the word and it becomes unfruitful. These two factors choke God's word. Again no fruit is borne.

Matt. 13:23 But the one sown upon the good earth, this is the one who after hearing the word and understanding it, produces fruit and one makes one hundred fold, another one sixty fold, and another thirty fold.

But the one sown upon the good earth, Now we move to the good ground.

this is the one who after hearing the word and understanding it, Note the emphasis on hearing and understanding.

produces fruit These are the ones that bear fruit (see Romans 7:4; Colossians 1:6,10 for the metaphorical use of bearing fruit).

and one makes one hundred fold, another one sixty fold, and another thirty fold. Varying degrees of fruit will be borne. “Despite the fact that much of the seed is lost in unresponsive people, there *is* an abundant harvest” (Hill, p. 230).

On the interpretation of the details of the parable, we should note the way Jesus explained it for His disciples. Not every element defined becomes part of the explanation. Therefore not every detail can be pressed for meaning. As will be true with the parable of the wheat and the weeds His interpretation will consist of explaining only the *major* details. He will not interpret every possible meaning of each word or phrase. We should do likewise in our interpretation.

The Parable Of The Wheat And The Weeds (13:24-30)

Jesus now delivers a second parable—the wheat and the weeds. This parable is unique to Matthew.

Matt. 13:24 Another parable he placed before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is compared to a man sowing good seed in his field.

Another parable he placed before them saying, The second parable was probably given after some time elapsed. It was necessary for the disciples to absorb what the first one meant.

The kingdom of heaven is compared to a man sowing good seed in his field. The kingdom of heaven is now specifically mentioned. The idea of the kingdom was in the interpretation of the first parable, but not in the parable itself.

Matt. 13:25 And while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds in the midst of the wheat, and then went away.

And while everyone was sleeping, At night when evil deeds take place (John 3:19).

his enemy came Satan and his forces.

and sowed weeds This could be the *lolium temulentum*—grass-like foliage that resembles wheat and barley. It was a poisonous weed which, botanically, is closely related to bearded wheat. In the early stages of growth is hard to distinguish it from the genuine wheat.

in the midst of the wheat, The two were mixed them together.

and then went away. They slipped away at night. Note that Scripture emphasizes various evil deeds done to Jesus happening at night (e.g. His betrayal and trial)

Matt. 13:26 And when the wheat sprung up, and it bore grain, then the weeds also appeared.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *also*.

And when the wheat sprung up, and it bore grain, The wheat comes up.

then the weeds also appeared. But so do the weeds and they begin to stand out from the wheat.

Matt. 13:27 Then the slaves came to landowner and said to him, “Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where then did weeds come from?”

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) read *the weeds*.

Then the slaves came to the landowner and said to him, The slaves report to their wealthy master.

“Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How can this be?

Where then did weeds come from? They were not meant to be here.

Matt. 13:28 And he said to them, ‘An enemy did this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us to go out and pull them up.’

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Vaticanus*, and a few other manuscripts, do not have the word *slaves*.

And he said to them, “An enemy man did this. The work of the enemy. **The slaves said to him, “Do you want us to go out and pull them up?”** What should we do?

Matt. 13:29 And he said, “No, lest while you gather up the weeds, you might uproot the wheat with them.”

Note on variant readings: Instead of *said* many manuscripts read *began to say*, a few manuscripts have *began to say to them*.

And he said, “No, lest while you gather up the weeds, you might uproot the wheat with them.” That is not their job. He will soon explain who will do this.

Matt. 13:30 Let them both grow together until the harvest. At the time of the harvest I will say to the harvesters, “Gather together first the weeds and bind them into bundles to burn them up; but the wheat gather together into my barn.’ ”

Let them both grow together until the harvest. Believers and unbelievers will grow up side by side until the end of the age.

At the time of the harvest I will say to the harvesters, Then the master will command to his harvesters what to do with the bad seed.

“Gather together first the weeds and bind them into bundles to burn them up; Judgment.

but the wheat gather together into my barn.’ Salvation.

The Parable Of The Mustard Seed (13:31-32)

The third parable of Jesus is that of the mustard seed.

Matt. 13:31 He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is compared to a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *presented* some manuscripts read *spoke*.

He presented another parable to them, saying, Parable number three is of the mustard seed.

The kingdom of heaven is compared to a mustard seed, This is not an illustration of wheat or barley but of a different type of plant that grows into a tree.

which a man took and sowed in his field. This seed is also sowed in a field.

Matt. 13:32 That which is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when it grows, it is larger than all the garden plants, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and dwell underneath its branches.

That which is the smallest of all the seeds, Though starting small it becomes bigger than all the plants. Donald Hagner writes:

In the ancient world and among the rabbis . . . the mustard seed was known for its smallness (whether it is white or black mustard that is intended makes little difference). It is also referred to as the smallest of all seeds in Antigonus of Carystus 91 and in Diodorus Siculus 1.35.2 (cf. Matt 17:20, where faith as small as a mustard seed is said to be able to move mountains). From this “smallest” of seeds (it matters not that there are smaller seeds), however, an amazingly large bushlike plant eventually

emerges, large enough to accommodate the nest of birds. The fact that is so remarkable that it took on a proverbial character (Hagner, p. 386).

yet when it grows, it is larger than all the garden plants, and becomes a tree, Eventually it becomes a tree.

so that the birds of heaven come and dwell underneath its branches. The tree is so large that the birds can shade under it.

The interpretation of this parable is varied. Is it referring to something good or something evil?

1. Evil In The Midst of Good. Those who feel it refers to something evil see the birds are representative of evil in the midst of the kingdom.
2. Those who see this representing something good see the birds as representative of the nations that are under the shade of the kingdom of God.

The Parable Of The Yeast (13:33)

Jesus now delivers the parable of the yeast.

Matt. 13:33 He spoke another parable to them. The kingdom of heaven is compared to yeast, which a woman took and hid into three measures of food until the entire thing was raised.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts, including *Sinaiticus* have *saying* after *to them*. A few manuscripts read *presented to them saying* while a couple of manuscripts do not have *spoke to them*.

He spoke another parable to them. The fourth parable given by Matthew.

The kingdom of heaven is compared to yeast, Yeast can have a positive or negative connotation in Scripture.

which a woman took and hid into three measures of food until the entire thing was raised. This parable is similar to the last one and the interpretation is likewise varied.

1. The Yeast is Evil. One interpretation sees yeast as something evil placed in the kingdom. This eventually causes the kingdom to become evil? Yeast is used of what is unclean and evil (16:6-12; Galatians 5:9; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; Exodus 12:15ff.)
2. The Yeast is Good. Others see the yeast as something good—emphasizing that the kingdom of God grows from something very small to a place where it takes over the entire world. They believe the context refers to the kingdom that starts on a small scale without a lot of fanfare.

The Parables Are Summarized (13:34-35)

Jesus now offers a summary of His parables.

Matt. 13:34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowds in parables, and he was not saying anything to them without a parable.

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowds in parables, and he was not saying anything to them without a parable. Statement doubled for emphasis.

Matt. 13:35 So that which was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *through Isaiah the prophet* instead of *the prophet*. Some manuscripts do not have *world*.

So that which was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, “I will open my mouth in parables, Emphasizing what He had earlier stated. True believers will understand.

I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.” Truths for the first time revealed.

The Wheat And The Weeds Interpreted (13:36-43)

Jesus now interprets this parable for His disciples.

Matt. 13:36 Then he left the multitudes, and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *went*, many manuscripts read *Jesus went*. A few manuscripts read *His* after *house*.

Then he left the multitudes, and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” Disciples are alone with Jesus. They want the parable of the weeds explained.

Matt. 13:37 And he answered and said, “The one sowing the good seed is the Son of Man.”

Note on variant readings: After *said* many manuscripts have *to them*. Instead of *Son of Man* one manuscripts reads *the Son of God* while one church Father (Epiphanius) has *God*.

And he answered and said, “The one sowing the good seed is the Son of Man.” Jesus is the sower.

Matt. 13:38 And the field is the world, and the good seed these are the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one,

And the field is the world, The seed is sowed in the world.

and the good seed these are the sons of the kingdom. The believers.

The weeds are the sons of the evil one, The two types of seeds.

Matt. 13:39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is at the completion of the age, and the harvesters are the angels.

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Sinaiticus* does not have the phrase *and the harvest is at the completion of the age*.

and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, Like Jesus, the devil is sowing his seed.

and the harvest is at the completion of the age, There will be judgment at the end of the age.

and the harvesters are the angels. The angels will be there to separate between the just and the unjust.

Matt. 13:40 Therefore just as the weeds are gathered together and burned with fire, so will it be at the completion of the age.

Note on a variant reading: After *age* some manuscripts have *this*.

Therefore just as the weeds are gathered together and burned with fire, so will it be at the completion of the age. The analogy is to the weeds.

Matt. 13:41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will gather together out of his kingdom everything that causes stumbling and the ones practicing lawlessness.

The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will gather together out of his kingdom The final judgment will determine which people are really His.

everything that causes stumbling and the ones practicing lawlessness. Not *everyone* but *everything* that causes others to stumble.

Matt. 13:42 And they will throw them into the fiery furnace. Then there will be the weeping and the grinding of teeth.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *they will* some manuscripts, including *Sinaiticus*, have *they are*.

And they will throw them into the fiery furnace. Then there will be the weeping and the grinding of teeth. Another metaphor of judgment.

Matt. 13:43 Then the righteous will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts have *of heaven* rather than *of their Father*. After *ears* many manuscripts have *to hear*.

Then the righteous will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. See Daniel 12:3

He who has ears, let him hear. Again He emphasizes the spiritual meaning behind this story from nature.

The Parable Of The Hidden Treasure (13:44)

The next parable concerns treasure hidden in a field.

Matt. 13:44 The kingdom of heaven is compared to a treasure hidden in the field, which a man, upon finding, hid it, and from the joy of it he went out and sold all things that he had and bought that field.

Note on variant readings: Many manuscripts have *again* before *The Kingdom*. A couple of manuscripts, including *Vaticanus*, do not have *all things*.

The kingdom of heaven is compared to a treasure hidden in the field, Now He will add three more parables.

which a man, upon finding, hid it, The treasure is the gospel. The response is that which occurs upon belief.

and from the joy of it he went out and sold all things that he had and bought that field. Discipleship carries a cost.

The Pearl Of Great Price (13:45-46)

The kingdom is now compared to a valuable pearl.

Matt. 13:45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a merchant man seeking good pearls.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts, including *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*, do not have *man*.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a merchant man seeking good pearls. Pearls are again

linked with a merchant man in Revelation 18:11,12. The pearl clearly is equivalent to the kingdom.

Matt. 13:46 And when he found one especially valuable pearl, he went away and sold everything that he had, and bought it.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *And when he found* many manuscripts read *who found*. A few manuscripts do not have *one*.

And when he found one especially valuable pearl, The pearl represents the gospel.

he went away and sold everything that he had, and bought it. Those who discover the truth of the kingdom forsake all to become a disciple.

The Parable Of The Dragnet (13:47-50)

Jesus compares the kingdom to a dragnet.

Matt. 13:47 Again the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a dragnet which was let down into the sea, and it caught all kinds of fish.

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a dragnet A net with floats on the top edge and weights on the bottom.

which was let down into the sea, It is thrown into the water, encircles the fish and then drags them to shore.

and it caught all kinds of fish. The net catches everything. The disciples, as Jesus promised have become fishers of men.

Matt. 13:48 When it was full, they drew it onto the shore; and they sat down, and gathered the good fish into the containers, and the bad ones they threw away.

When it was full, they drew it onto the shore; and they sat down, and gathered the good fish into the containers, and the bad ones they threw away. The fish are separated into good and bad.

Matt. 13:49 In this manner it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the evil ones out of the midst of the righteous ones.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *age* one manuscripts reads *world* while a few have *this age*.

In this manner it will be at the end of the age. Now the explanation as to its meaning.

The angels will come Again, this is God's job, not ours. It emphasizes again the judgment at the end of the age where the righteous are separated from the unrighteous.

Matt. 13:50 And they will throw them into the fiery furnace; where there will be the weeping and grinding of teeth.

And they will throw them into the fiery furnace; where there will be the weeping and grinding of teeth. The place of judgment again emphasized.

The Parable Of The Scribe (13:51-52)

Jesus compares the kingdom to a scribe.

Matt. 13:51 “Have you understood all these things?” They said to him, “Yes.”

Note on variant readings: Before *Have you* many manuscripts read *Jesus said to them*. After *yes* many manuscripts read *Lord*

“Have you understood all these things?” Do they comprehend? Understanding is the key idea according to Jesus.

They said to him, “Yes.” To some degree they do.

Matt. 13:52 He said to them, “Therefore every scribe being trained in the kingdom of the heavens is compared to a man who is the head of the house, who brings out of his treasure both old and new.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *Jesus said to them* while a couple read *And He is saying to them*.

He said to them, “Therefore For this reason.

every scribe being trained in the kingdom of the heavens A scribe is a scholar of the law. This is one who has been discipled in the kingdom of heaven.

is compared to a man who is the head of the house, who brings out of his treasure both old and new. This scribe will understand things old and new, the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

Jesus Is Rejected In His Hometown (13:53-58)

Jesus returns home and is rejected by His people. This marks the transition from the Galilee to Judea.

Matt. 13:53 And it came about when Jesus finished these parables he departed from there.

And it came about when Jesus finished these parables, he departed from there. Jesus now leaves the multitudes.

Matt. 13:54 And coming into his own homeland, he began teaching them in their synagogues, so that they became amazed, and said, “From where is this wisdom, and these powers?”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *all this wisdom*.

And coming into his own homeland, Jesus had left Nazareth, His hometown, after the arrest of John the Baptist (cf. 4:13). He moved to Capernaum making it His headquarters.

he began teaching them in their synagogues, A synagogue of the people of Nazareth. This was probably the same place where He worshipped as young man.

so that they became amazed, and said, “From where is this wisdom, and these powers?” Their utter amazement at His teaching did not provoke faith but rather skepticism. They wonder where the source of His wisdom came from.

Matt. 13:55 This is the son of the carpenter, is it not? Is not his mother called Mary and his brothers Jacob and Joseph and Simon and Judas?

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *Is this not the son of the carpenter?*

This is the son of the carpenter, is it not? His family was well-known. Only here in the gospels do we discover that Jesus was the son of the carpenter. The word can mean “builder” as well as carpenter. Joseph, the husband of Mary, is found only in 1:16-20; 2:13,19. He probably died before the public ministry of Jesus.

Is not his mother called Mary The name literally means Miriam (the Semitic form of the name). She is only mentioned by name here and 1:16-20 and 2:11.

and his brothers The brothers of Jesus are mentioned, not by name, in 12:46,48. In the remainder of the New Testament only the name James (nine times) and Jude (Jude 1) occur again. The people of the synagogue knew Jesus brothers by name.

Jacob This is James, the author of the New Testament book by his name.

and Joseph We know nothing about his life from the pages of the New Testament.

and Simon Like Joseph, we know nothing of his life from the pages of God’s Word.

and Judas? This is Jude, who identifies himself in his New Testament book as the brother of James.

Matt. 13:56 And his sisters are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all this?

And his sisters are they not all with us? The sisters are mentioned only here and in Mark 3:32; 6:3 in the New Testament. This indicates that the sisters still lived in Nazareth.

Where then did this man get all this? Since they knew His family, they could not understand how all these things could happen with Him.

Matt. 13:57 And they were being offended by him. And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not dishonored except in his hometown and in his house.”

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts, including *Sinaiticus*, have own hometown.

And they were being offended by him. They were being scandalized (see John 6:42; 7:15).

And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not dishonored except in his hometown Though Jesus was held to be a prophet by others (21:11,46), the people in His hometown did not consider Him such.

and in his house.” Neither did His family (John 7:5; Mark 3:21)

Matt. 13:58 And he did not many miracles there because of their unbelief. He was not going to keep performing miracles for those who would not be convinced.

Summary to Chapter 13

Chapter thirteen marks an important transition in Jesus’ ministry. Now rejected by the people, He begins to speak in parables—earthly stories with a heavenly meaning. The purpose of these parables is to explain to His own disciples the mysteries or sacred secrets of the kingdom.

Jesus give eight parables in this chapter. Two of them, the parable of the sower, and the parable of the wheat and the weeds, He explains. We learn from the parable of the sower that not everyone who initially responds to the word of the kingdom will continue. Many will sprout up quickly only to fall away when trouble occurs or when the care of this world takes precedence over the kingdom of God.

The ministry of Jesus will now move away from His homeland in the Galilee toward His inevitable fate in Jerusalem. The purpose of His coming—to die for the sins of the world— will begin to be made evident as He moves away from the confines of Galilee.

**Matthew
Chapter 14**

There is a connection that links the first section of chapter 14 with the end of chapter 13—a wrong understanding of Jesus' identity. As the people in Nazareth had a wrong understanding of the identity of Jesus (13:53-57), so did King Herod. He believed that Jesus was the resurrected John the Baptist.

Herod And John The Baptist (14:1-12)

King Herod hears about the miracles of Jesus and assumes that He is John the Baptist risen from the dead. Matthew then flashes back to the story of the murder of John by Herod.

Matt. 14:1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus,

At that time General statement of time. It has no chronological significance.

Herod the tetrarch Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. He was the tetrarch (ruler of part of a territory [originally a fourth part] of Galilee (cf. Luke 3:1).

heard the reports about Jesus, He heard of the “fame” of Jesus The same word is used in 4:24.

Matt. 14:2 and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist; he himself has been raised from the dead; and that is why these miraculous powers are working in him.”

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *This is not John the Baptist, is it?* After *Baptist* some manuscripts read *whom I myself beheaded*.

and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist; he himself This is emphatic in the Greek.

has been raised from the dead; His guilty conscious made him afraid that John the Baptist had returned from the dead. Shows not only the great respect for John but also the idea that the holy servants of God, such as the prophets, could return to the earth after their death (the same idea is contained in 16:14).

and that is why these miraculous powers are working in him.” This was Herod's explanation of the power of Jesus' miracles.

Matt. 14:3 For Herod had arrested John, bound him, and placed him in the prison, on account of Herodias, the wife of Philip his brother.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *then* before *Herod*. Some manuscripts do not have the word *him* after *bound*. Two manuscripts do not have the word *Philip*.

For Herod had arrested John, bound him, and placed him in the prison, We are now given the background for Herod's fears. These events happened at an earlier time. Matthew had been content just to mention the arrest of John (4:12) without giving any details

on account of Herodias, the wife of Philip his brother. The source of the arrest.

Matt. 14:4 For John had been saying to him that, "It is not lawful for you to have her."

For John had been saying to him that, "It is not lawful for you to have her." Herod had seized John because of his opposition to Herod's marriage to Herodias. Herod not only unjustly divorced his first wife (which provoked a war with her father—the king of Petra) in order to marry Herodias, he also broke Jewish law by marrying his half-brothers wife (Leviticus 16:18). John's protest would represent the orthodox Jewish opinion. John was continually saying (imperfect tense in Greek) that he was wrong in doing this. Thus we may have a continual campaign of John against Herod.

Matt. 14:5 And though he was desiring to kill him, he feared the crowd, because they regarded him as a prophet.

And though he was desiring to kill him, Herod wanted to silence John permanently.

he feared the crowd, The same fear will occur in attempting to arrest Jesus (21:46).

because they regarded him as a prophet. The crowd believed that John was God's spokesman.

Matt. 14:6 But when Herod's birthday party came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and it pleased Herod.

But when Herod's birthday party came, A day of merriment.

the daughter of Herodias danced before them, We learn that her name was Salome—the daughter of Herodias by her first marriage (Josephus *Antiquities* 18.5.4). Though the status of dancing women was low in that culture it is not difficult to imagine that a member of Herod's household would stoop to this type of behavior. As we shall see, the morals of this court were very low.

and it pleased Herod. Herod was delighted with her dancing.

Matt. 14:7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give to her whatever she might ask.

Where he confessed with an oath Swore with an oath shows the strength and seriousness of the promise. Note also he said it before his guests.

to give to her whatever she requested. He made a reckless offer.

Matt. 14:8 And having been prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here upon a plate the head of John the Baptist.”

And having been prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here upon a plate the head of John the Baptist.” The girl followed her mother’s prompting. This shows how degraded the royal court had become.

Matt. 14:9 And although, the king was grieved, because of his oaths and because of the ones seated together with him, he commanded it to be given.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *And the king was grieved; but because of his oaths.* Some manuscripts read *to her* after *to be given.*

And although, the king was grieved, The title “king” refers to Herod as a ruler for he was not strictly a king.

because of his oaths and because of the ones seated together with him, he commanded it to be given. He regretted making the foolish promise but he had already given his oath to those seated with him at the banquet. “Herod’s fear of his guests overcame his scruples” (Hill, p. 244).

Matt. 14:10 And he sent and had John beheaded in the prison.

And he sent and had John beheaded in the prison. Though he sent his soldiers to do the evil deed, Matthew makes it clear the responsibility was Herod’s. John’s murder was contrary to Jewish law in at least two ways: (1) He had no trial and; (2) He was beheaded.

Matt. 14:11 And his head was brought upon a plate and given to the young girl; and she brought it to her mother.

And his head was brought upon a plate The horrible request was granted.

and given to the young girl; Salome (born A.D. 10) would have been at least 18 or 19 at the time.

and she brought it to her mother. The real instigator of the murder.

Matt. 14:12 And his disciples came and took away his body and buried it, and went and told it to Jesus.

Note on variant readings: The manuscripts have a different Greek words for body (*soma* and *ptoma*). Instead of *his body* some manuscripts read *body*. Instead of *buried it* some manuscripts have *buried him*.

And his disciples came and took away his body and buried it, For those who are buried see 27:57-61 for Jesus and Acts 8:2 for Stephen.

and went and told it to Jesus. This points to the close ties that John had with Jesus.

Although John the Baptist came in the role of Elijah, Scripture says, “they did to him whatever they pleased” (17:12). John was regarded as a prophet and he suffered the same fate as did the other prophets (23:31-35). Jesus described John as “greater than anyone born of woman” (11:11) yet he was murdered through a bizarre series of events. The unlawful murder of John will be followed by the unrighteous murder of the Lord Himself. These unlawful murders will continue—later with Stephen, and then thousands of other martyrs who have served the same Lord. As Jesus was soon to follow in John’s path, so His disciples must also be prepared for death (cf. 10:21-22,39; 24:9).

Though John’s murder will foreshadow the murder of Jesus (17:12) the Bible makes it clear that death is only temporary. It is the end of physical life, but not spiritual life.

The Feeding Of The Five Thousand (14:13-21)

Jesus now performs the miracle of the multiplication of the fish and bread. Apart from the resurrection, this is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels.

Note on a variant reading: A couple of manuscripts do not have the words *by boat* .

Matt. 14:13 Now when Jesus heard it, he withdrew from there by boat unto a deserted place by himself. And after the crowd heard it, they followed after him on foot from the towns.

Now when Jesus heard it, he withdrew from there by boat Jesus withdraws after hearing of John’s death. There is no indication that Jesus is attempting to flee Herod. Chronological sequence is not exact since Jesus could hardly withdraw from Nazareth (13:53-58) by means of a boat!

unto a deserted place by himself. More likely He was turning His thoughts to His upcoming suffering.

And after the crowd heard it, they followed after him on foot from the towns. As always the crowd followed Him.

Matt. 14:14 And when he went ashore and saw the large crowd, he was moved with compassion on them and he healed their sick.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *And when Jesus went ashore*.

And when he went ashore and saw the large crowd, Jesus was again confronted with a large crowd.

he was moved with compassion on them For same idea see 9:36; 15:32.

and he healed their sick. This is the summary statement.

Matt. 14:15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him saying, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is passed. Send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *disciples* rather than *His disciples*. Some manuscripts have *therefore* before *Send*. Some manuscripts read *surrounding villages* rather than merely *villages*.

And when it was evening, The hour was late.

his disciples came to him saying, They had not been previously mentioned in this story.

“This is a deserted place and the hour is passed. It was late and they were out in the middle of nowhere.

Send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” A reasonable request.

Matt. 14:16 But Jesus said to them, “They do not have need to go away; you give them something to eat.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *He said* rather than *Jesus said*.

And Jesus said to them, “They do not have need to go away, Jesus says there is no need for them to leave.

you give them something to eat.” You is emphatic. Jesus’ answer must have been incomprehensible to

them because the disciples could not give them anything to eat.

Matt. 14:17 And they said to him, “We do not have anything here except five loaves of bread and two fish.”

And they said to him, “We do not have anything here except five loaves of bread and two fish.” They express their lack of resources.

Matt. 14:18 And he said, “Bring them here to me.”

And he said, “Bring them here to me” Jesus requests the meager amount of food.

Matt. 14:19 Then he commanded the crowds to sit down upon the grass. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up into heaven, he blessed it and broke the loaves and he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *You command the crowds* rather than *He commanded the crowds*. Instead of *taking the five loaves* one manuscript reads *He took the five loaves*.

Then he commanded the crowds to sit down They are commanded to recline as if they were eating a meal

upon the grass. This is a banquet on the grass.

And taking the five loaves and the two fish, How Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish is not explained.

and looking up into heaven, he blessed it and broke the loaves The traditional prayer was: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

and he gave them to the disciples He gave it to the disciples to distribute it.

and the disciples gave them to the crowds. They, in turn, handed out the food to the crowd. The sequence of the verbs and participles “take,” “bless,” “break,” and “give” is the same as in the account of the Lord’s Supper (26:26,27; see also Acts 2:46; 20:7,11; 27:35; 1 Corinthians 11:24).

Matt. 14:20 And they all ate and were filled, and they took up from the leftovers of the fragments, twelve baskets full.

And they all ate and were filled, This is the statement of the miracle. This miracle is a foretaste of the Messianic banquet. When the kingdom is established there will be no one who is hungry—everyone will be satisfied.

and they took up from the leftovers of the fragments, twelve baskets full. Twelve baskets probably meant to symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel although many commentators see no symbolism in the number twelve. Each disciple filled one basket with the leftovers.

Matt. 14:21 And the ones who ate were about five thousand men, besides the women and the children.

And the ones who ate were about five thousand men, The number of men was in the vicinity of five thousand.

besides the women and the children. No attempt is made to count all who were fed. Two Old Testament passages come to mind:

(1) The miraculous provision of bread in a lonely place—the desert, reminds the reader of the manna of Exodus 16.

(2) The details of the story also echo Elisha's feeding of one hundred men with twenty loaves (2 Kings 4:42-44).

In both cases a prophet provided literal food and Jesus the great prophet did likewise (though on a vastly increased scale).

Jesus Walks Upon The Water (14:22-33)

After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus sends His disciples ahead to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. When the boat gets into trouble, Jesus comes to them by walking upon the water.

Matt. 14:22 And immediately he made the disciples to get into the boat, and go ahead of him unto the other side, while He dismissed the crowds.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts do not have the word *immediately*. Instead of *the disciples* several manuscripts (including *Vaticanus*) read *His disciples*. Two manuscripts do not have the words *of Him*.

And immediately he made the disciples to get into the boat, and go ahead of him unto the other side, while He dismissed the crowds. Jesus did not want to stay around after this miracle (see John 6:15). He sent the disciples on ahead while He dismissed the multitudes.

Matt. 14:23 And after dismissing the crowds, he went up to the mountain by himself to pray. And when it was evening, he was there alone.

And after dismissing the crowds, he went up to the mountain by himself to pray. Jesus now withdraws to pray. The idea of Jesus seeking solitude is an important theme in Matthew's gospel.

And when it was evening, Jesus was there until evening.

he was there alone. And He remained alone.

Matt. 14:24 But the boat was already many stadia from the land, being battered about by the waves, for the wind was against them.

Note on variant readings: A few manuscripts do not have the word *already*. Some manuscripts have *in the midst of the sea* after *the boat was already*. Some manuscripts have *twenty five or thirty stadia* instead of *many*.

But the boat was already many stadia from the land The boat had left some time earlier and was about a mile or two from shore (a *stadium* was an ancient measure of distance equal to 185 meters).

being battered about by the waves, for the wind was against them. Because of the contrary wind and the harassing waves, they had been able to row only a relatively short distance.

Matt. 14:25 And in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them, walking upon the sea.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *came* some manuscripts have *went away*.

And in the fourth watch of the night, This would have been from 3 A.M. to 6. A.M. The disciples had been fighting the storm all night.

he came to them, walking upon the sea. Jesus, again shows that He is Lord over nature.

Matt. 14:26 And when his disciples saw him walking upon the water, they were terrified, saying, “It is a phantom!” And they cried out in fear.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *His disciples* some manuscripts read *they*.

And when his disciples saw him walking upon the water, they were terrified, The tired and fearful disciples were even more frightened upon seeing Jesus walking among the darkness and the waves.

saying, “It is a phantom!” Craig Keener writes about their response:

Belief in ghosts or disembodied spirits was common on a popular level in antiquity, even though the idea of ghosts contradicted popular Jewish teachings about the resurrection from the dead (Keener, *Background*, p. 86).

And they cried out in fear. Their reaction is how we would expect anyone to react in a similar situation.

Matt. 14:27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take courage, it is I myself; do not be afraid.”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *Jesus spoke* some manuscripts read *He spoke*.

But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take courage, Jesus calms their fears by identifying Himself.

it is I myself; do not be afraid.” This phrase has a deeper meaning than the simple self-identification of Jesus. The words “I am” in Greek are the very same used in Exodus 3:14 when God identified Himself to Moses by telling him His name. Jesus used this same phrase elsewhere to identify Himself (John 8:58).

Matt. 14:28 Peter answered and said to him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

Peter answered and said to him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” Why Peter requested this is unknown. Peter is a main focus in Matthew’s gospel (16:16-19; 17:24-27).

Matt. 14:29 And he said to him, “Come!” And Peter came out of the boat, and walked upon the water, and came toward Jesus.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *to come to Jesus* instead of *and came toward Jesus*.

And he said to him, “Come!” Jesus permits His request.

And Peter came out of the boat, and walked upon the water, and came toward Jesus. Peter is an example of both faith and failure.

Matt. 14:30 But seeing the mighty wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out saying, “Lord, save me.”

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts do not have the word *mighty*. One manuscript has *exceedingly mighty*.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *mighty* before *wind*.

But seeing the mighty wind, he became afraid, His lack of concentration upon Jesus is what led to his lack of faith.

and beginning to sink, he cried out saying, “Lord, save me.” Note that his prayer is right to the point.

Matt. 14:31 And immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

And immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him, The help of Jesus is immediate. Peter was saved even though he lacked faith.

and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” The Lord promises to take care of His own.

Matt. 14:32 And when they got into the boat the wind ceased.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *got into* some manuscripts read *went up into*.

And when they got into the boat the wind ceased. Note the miracle of the storm ceasing as soon as Jesus enters the boat.

Matt. 14:33 And the ones in the boat worshipped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *they came* or *they came toward* before *worshipped Him*.

And the ones in the boat worshipped him, They worship the One whom the wind and sea obey.

saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.” They make a confession of faith. At this point in their spiritual understanding, the phrase “Son of God” probably meant that Jesus a unique messenger of God. Later the church will understand that Jesus was actual God in human flesh. This confession anticipates the answer given to the direct question as to the identity of Jesus in 16:16.

Jesus Heals In Gennesaret (14:34-36)

When they reach the other side of the Sea, Jesus heals the multitudes.

Matt. 14:34 And when they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret.

Note on a variant reading: *Gennesaret* is spelled a number of different ways in the manuscripts.

And when they had crossed over, They are now on the other side.

they came to the land of Gennesaret. Gennesaret was a village that was on the shore of the sea of Galilee, a couple of miles southwest of Capernaum.

Matt. 14:35 And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent out into all of that surrounding region, and they brought to Him all the ones who were sick.

And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent out into all of that surrounding region, Since this was close to His headquarters at Capernaum the people recognized Him.

and they brought to him all the ones who were sick. They knew His ability to heal.

Matt. 14:36 And they were begging him that they might only touch the edge of his outer garment. And as many as touched it were healed.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Vaticanus*) do not have *Him*.

And they were begging him that they might only touch the edge of his outer garment. No mention is made of the size of the crowds but presumably it was very large.

And as many as touched it were healed. The power of Jesus was such that those who merely touched His clothing were healed.

Summary to Chapter 14

The Gospel According To Matthew

Chapter 14 starts with a flashback with the story of Herod and John the Baptist. Jesus' miracles catch the attention of Herod who superstitiously assumes that Jesus is the reincarnated John.

Matthew records the sordid details of John's murder by Herod.

Jesus withdrew from that area after hearing of the death of John—His time had not yet come and possibly He was avoiding any premature conflict with the powers that be.

Next Matthew records the only miracle (apart from the resurrection) that is listed in all four gospels—the feeding of the five thousand.

Jesus sends His disciples ahead while He remains behind. As they find themselves in trouble on the Sea of Galilee Jesus comes to them walking upon the water. When they reach the other side Jesus heals the multitudes in Gennesaret.

**Matthew
Chapter 15**

Jesus continues to clash with the religious rulers. After these confrontations He moves to Gentile country and heals the daughter of a Canaanite woman. In addition, He performs another miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish.

Jesus And The Traditions Of The Elders (15:1-20)

Jesus now makes a frontal attack on the traditions and interpretations of the elders which were at variance with the truth of the word of God. He will respond to their charges by telling them they are actually disobeying God's commandments with their man-made traditions.

Matt. 15:1 Then Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying,

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *the* before *Pharisees*.

Then Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, This may have been a formal or semi-formal delegation.

Matt. 15:2 “Why are your disciples transgressing the tradition of the elders? For they are not washing their hands before they eat bread.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the word *their*.

Why are your disciples transgressing the tradition of the elders? The tradition of the elders is a technical term for the oral tradition of the Pharisees was an interpretation of the Law.

For they are not washing their hands before they eat bread. There is no Old Testament commandment concerning the ceremonial washing of the hands before the eating of ordinary meals.

Matt. 15:3 He answered and said to them, “Why are you yourselves transgressing the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?”

He answered and said to them, “Why are you yourselves The Greek is emphatic. It is they themselves that are doing this.

transgressing the commandment of God What they are doing is transgressing God's commandment.

for the sake of your tradition?” Rather than responding to them Jesus goes on the offensive and accuses them of disobeying God's commandment. *Yon* is emphatic.

Matt. 15:4 For God said, ‘Honor your father and your mother; and he who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death.’

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *God commanded* rather than *God said*. Some manuscripts do not have *your* after mother and father.

For God said, ‘Honor your father and your mother;’ The fifth commandment. Notice Jesus indicates that God Himself said this.

and he who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death.’ This brings special emphasis on the supreme penalty.

Matt. 15:5 But you yourselves are saying, “Whosoever says to his father or to his mother, “Whatever support you might have had from me is now given to God,

Note on a variant reading: One manuscript (*Sinaiticus*) has *it is nothing* after *to his mother*.

But you yourselves are saying, In contrast to God, *you* are saying.

“Whosoever says to his father or to his mother, “Whatever support you might have had from me is now given to God, In contrast to what God said, the Pharisees promoted a practice that violated the spirit and the letter of the fifth commandment. If one designated a formal vow of one’s material wealth as a gift or offering for support of the temple ritual, one was discharged from the responsibility to one’s parents—the money was no longer available to support the parents. This tradition violated the biblical commandment. The vow to give one’s wealth to the temple was regarded as sacred and could not be altered (cf. Deuteronomy 23:21-23; Numbers 30:3-5).

Matt. 15:6 he is not to honor his father.’ Thus you have nullified the word of God through your tradition.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts have *and his mother* after *his father*. Some manuscripts have *the commandment of God* instead of *the word of God*. Other manuscripts have *the law of God* instead of *the word of God*.

he is not to honor his father.’ Thus you have nullified the word of God through your tradition. The parents right to expect a provision from their son was invalidated or nullified. They were robbed of their rightful privilege (cf. Proverbs 28:24). The clear commandment of the law was transgressed.

Matt. 15:7 You hypocrites, rightly Isaiah has prophesied concerning you, saying,

You hypocrites, rightly Isaiah has prophesied concerning you, saying, Matthew adds an Old Testament citation (Isaiah 29:13) to seal the case against the Pharisees.

Matt. 15:8 ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *This people* some manuscripts read *This people draws near to be with their mouth and*.

‘This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. At the bottom is the issue of hypocrisy, they were pretending to obey the will of God while in fact they were transgressing it.

Matt. 15:9 And in vain they worship me, teaching as commandments the doctrines of men.’

And in vain they worship me, teaching as commandments the doctrines of men.” Human commandments have taken the place of the commandments of God (see also chapter 23; Colossians 2:22; Titus 1:14).

Matt. 15:10 And after summoning the crowd, he said to them, Listen and understand.

And after summoning the crowd, he said to them, Listen and understand. Jesus calls the crowd together in order to make an important point.

Matt. 15:11 It is not that which goes into the mouth that defiles the man, but that which proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.

Note variant readings: One manuscripts has *everything* after *not*. Instead of *this (thing)* a few Latin manuscripts read *that (thing)*.

It is not that which goes into the mouth that defiles the man.” It is not the food we eat that makes us clean or unclean.

but that which proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man. Defilement comes from within not without. The error of the Pharisees and their scribes as revealed here can only be seen as a tragic irony. Those who were supposedly the most deeply committed to the practice of the righteousness of the law invented a tradition that invalidated God’s commandment.

Matt. 15:12 Then the disciples came to him saying, “You know that the Pharisees were offended after hearing your statement.”

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *His* after *disciples*.

Then the disciples came to him saying, “You know that the Pharisees were offended after hearing your statement.” The Pharisees were scandalized at Jesus’ statement. Did Jesus know that He had offended the Pharisees? If He did know did it matter to Him?

Matt. 15:13 But he answered and said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

But he answered and said, “Every plant which The statement refers to the Pharisees themselves, not their tradition. In the parable of the Sower and the Weeds, the plants are people.

my heavenly Father This phrase is a favorite of Matthew. By using this term, Jesus shows the special relationship that He had with the Father. This unique relationship allowed Him to speak with absolute authority.

has not planted Jesus’ answer showed His strong rejection of the Pharisees.

will be uprooted. This phrase is symbolic of their destruction. The Pharisees had not been planted by God and thus God will pull them out of the ground. This uprooting will take place at the time of judgment.

Matt. 15:14 Leave them alone; for they are blind guides of blind men. And if the blind lead the blind both will fall into the pit.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *of blind men*.

Leave them alone, This is probably Jesus’ response to their initial question.

for they are blind guides of blind men. Their being offended should be no worry of the disciples because they are blind.

And if the blind lead the blind If blind men lead other blind men.

both will fall into the pit.” Jesus shows the absurdity of the situation.

Matt. 15:15 Peter answered and said to him, “Explain this parable to us.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *this* before *parable*.

Peter answered and said to him, Peter acts as spokesman for the group.

“Explain this parable to us.” He wants to know what Jesus meant.

Matt. 15:16 And he said, “Are you yourselves still without understanding?”

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *Jesus* instead of *He*.

And he said, “Are you yourselves still without understanding?” Jesus responds with a mild rebuke.

Matt. 15:17 Do you not understand that everything that enters into the mouth goes into the stomach and then goes out in the sewer?

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *not yet* instead of *not*.

Do you not understand Obviously they did not

that everything that enters into the mouth goes into the stomach

and then goes out in the sewer? Food is of little consequence to the spiritual state of a person.

Matt. 15:18 But the things that proceed out of the mouth come out from the heart, and these things defile the man.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including Sinaiticus) do not have *and these things defile the man*.

But the things that proceed out of the mouth come out from the heart, The heart refers to the genuine feelings of a person, not merely what that person says. The mouth merely reflects what the heart is thinking.

and these things defile the man. In contrast the words that one speaks is what defiles a person.

Matt. 15:19 For out of the heart comes out evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including Sinaiticus) do not have *For out of the heart*.

For out of the heart comes out evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. Jesus lists the type of things that come from the heart.

Matt. 15:20 These are the things that defile the man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.

These are the things that defile the man, The thought of verse eighteen is repeated here for emphasis.

but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man. The real problem is in the heart.

The Faith Of The Canaanite Woman (15:21-28)

Jesus heals the daughter of a Gentile woman after she pleads with Him for the healing.

Matt. 15:21 Then Jesus went out from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon.

Then Jesus went out from there, Jesus now moves to Gentile territory. He has withdrawn from Israel ideologically (verses 1-20) now he will withdraw geographically. This is not a case of Gentiles or outsiders coming to Him (4:24,25). He is now going to them.

and withdrew However, before He goes to the Gentiles He will withdraw for some temporary seclusion

into the district of Tyre and Sidon. Instead of crossing to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee he moves north to Tyre and Sidon (part of modern Lebanon and Syria).

Jesus has already mentioned Tyre and Sidon (11:22) in comparison to the non-repentant cities of where He had performed many of His mighty works. These cities will now have another chance to believe in Him.

Elijah, who ministered in this same territory during a period of unbelief of the Israelite people, also found great faith in a woman from this region (1 Kings 17).

Matt. 15:22 And behold, a Canaanite woman came out from that region, and began crying out, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David. My daughter is badly demon-possessed.”

Note on variant readings: Instead of *began crying out* some manuscripts read *cried out*. Other manuscripts read *shouted out* while a few others read *began shouting out*. After *crying out* many manuscripts read *to Him*. One manuscript reads *after Him*.

And behold, a Canaanite woman came out from that region, Marks calls her a “Greek” which almost certainly means that the conversation took place in Greek rather than in Aramaic.

and began crying out, saying, The Greek contains the idea that she continued to cry out or repeatedly cried out.

“Have mercy on me, This is the same appeal that the blind men made (9:27) who also appealed to Jesus as the Son of David.

O Lord, Lord can have a number of connotations. It can be a simple form of address or it can be an acknowledgment that Jesus is the Lord.

Son of David. The combination of Lord with Son of David shows a reverential address. She recognizes Jesus as the Son of David—the Jewish designation of the Messiah. Just how much she understood what the title meant is not stated. It may have only been some political title as far as she understood it. She is not the only person that Jesus helped who did not understand who He is (9:27; 12:23; 20:30ff.). However, as the Son of David, she would have no right to call upon Him seeing that this title is exclusively Jewish—unless she was one of those Gentiles who converted to Judaism. There is, however, no evidence that this was the case.

My daughter is badly demon-possessed.” Her request showed the depth of her distress. Several things should be noted:

1. Her own religion was unable to do anything to help her demon-possessed daughter. When it came time to find a solution to the problem,

it was not in her religion but to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that she looked to. This woman's suffering was great because of the love she felt for her daughter and there was nothing that her faith could do about it.

2. The presence of the demon in her daughter gives further evidence as to their actual existence. They seem to cross all boundaries of age, sex and national origin.

3. For whatever reason, she came alone to Jesus. The depth of her anguish was most likely easier to show apart from her daughter's presence.

4. Furthermore, her request to Jesus was in spite of certain disadvantages she had.

First, she was a woman. The Jews did not look kindly on a woman talking to a Rabbi. Also it was unusual for a Rabbi to be addressed by a woman (see John 4:7-9,27). But Jesus was not any Rabbi as she herself recognized, He was the Son of David, the Messiah.

Secondly, she was a Gentile coming to a Jew. Therefore she would be one of the "heathens" who the Jews looked down upon (Romans 1:13-16; 2:9ff.; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24).

Thirdly, not only was she a Gentile, but she was a Canaanite by ancestry and possibly also by religion. The Canaanites were worshippers of Baal as well as being an accursed race in which Israel was to be separate from (Genesis 9:25-27; 10:6; Exodus 23:23-33; 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-5, 16; 20:16-18). And yet, even with these disadvantages of her position, the great need that she had caused her to approach Jesus with her request.

5. Mark tells us that she came to Jesus having heard about Him (Mark 7:27). Just how and where she heard about Him is unknown. Though Jesus withdrew to this area to gain some sort of privacy from the multitudes, still He is recognized.

Matt. 15:23 But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came out and began to urge him saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting out after us."

But he did not answer her a word. Though Jesus did not answer her, neither did He send her away.

And his disciples came out and began to urge him saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting out after us." Jesus at first ignores the woman's request but her continual crying out annoyed the disciples.

Matt. 15:24 He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts read *these lost sheep*.

He answered and said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” His surprising lack of response is now explained. This statement confirms the limits of His mission as in 10:5,6. However we will immediately see that this situation will be altered with the healing of the woman’s daughter as well as other events Matthew records (21:43; 24:14; 28:19).

Also, though Jesus said that others came first, He did not deny that she could come second (see Mark 7:27).

Matt. 15:25 But she came out and began to bow down before him, saying, “Lord, help me!”

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *bowed down* instead of *began to bow down*.

But she came out and began to bow down before him, The word translated *bow down* can also be translated *worship*.

saying, “Lord, help me!” The woman continues after being rebuffed by Jesus. She is convinced that He is the Jewish Messiah and that He can heal her daughter.

Matt. 15:26 Then he answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *it is not good* some manuscripts read *it is not lawful*.

Then he answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” The children refers to those of Israel who have the right to receive bread (ie. those who belong to the kingdom). *Dogs* refers to those outside the kingdom.

Matt. 15:27 But she said, “Yes, Lord; but even the dogs are eating the scraps that fall from their masters’ table.”

But she said, “Yes, Lord; but even the dogs are eating the scraps that fall from their masters’ table.” The banquet is for Israel. The woman seems to realize this but acknowledges that the dogs still eat the crumbs that fall from the table.

Matt. 15:28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to as you wish.” And her daughter was healed that very hour.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts do not have the word *Jesus*.

Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to as you wish.” And her daughter was healed that very hour. We have another compliment to a Gentile (cf. 8:10 where a

deliberate contrast to Israel is made). The address, “O woman” shows how much Jesus was moved by her faith. An immediate healing followed though the healing itself is not described.

The Feeding Of The Four Thousand (15:29-39)

Jesus repeats the multiplication of the loaves and fish but this time the miracles occurs among the Gentiles.

Matt. 15:29 And departing from there, Jesus went along the Sea of Galilee, and went up into the mountain and sat down.

And departing from there, Jesus went along the Sea of Galilee, and went up into the mountain and sat down. Jesus now moves to the Sea of Galilee and again goes to an unnamed mountain.

Matt. 15:30 And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the maimed, the mute, and many others, and they put them alongside his feet, and he healed them.

Note on variant readings: A few manuscripts read *the feet of Jesus* instead of *His feet*. After *healed them* a few manuscripts read *all*.

And the great crowd came to him, having with them the lame, the blind, the maimed, the mute, and many others, and they put them alongside his feet, and he healed them. As usual the crowds flock to Jesus and also as usual He healed them. Of the four categories of people mentioned only the “deformed” are not mentioned again in Matthew.

Matt. 15:31 so that the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speak, the deformed made well, the lame ones walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

Note on variant readings: Many manuscripts read *the crowds* (plural) instead of simply *the crowd*. Some manuscripts read *bearing* after *mute* while other manuscripts read *bearing and speaking*. Some manuscripts do not have *the deformed made well*. Instead of *they glorified* some manuscripts read *they began to glorify*.

so that the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speak, The word translated *mute* can also mean *deaf*.

the deformed made well, the lame ones walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel. The four categories are restated again but this time in a different order. This may have been a Gentile crowd.

Matt. 15:32 After summoning his disciples Jesus said, “I have compassion upon the crowd, because they have remained with me now three days, and have nothing to eat. And I do not wish to release them hungry, lest they might faint on the way.”

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts do not have *His* after *disciples*.

After summoning his disciples Jesus said, “I have compassion upon the crowd, because they have remained with me now three days, and have nothing to eat. A crowd had stayed with Jesus in the desert for three days.

And I do not wish to release them hungry, lest they might faint on the way.” In contrast to the previous occasion with a large crowd, He is the one who initiates the concern for the multitudes. The disciples do not seem to be as concerned about the Gentiles as they were about the Jewish crowds.

Matt. 15:33 And the disciples said to him, “Where could we get enough loaves in this deserted place to feed such a crowd?”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *the disciples* many manuscripts read *His disciples*.

And the disciples said to him, “Where could we get enough loaves in this deserted place to feed such a crowd?” How quickly they forget (see chapter 14).

Matt. 15:34 Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven and a few small fish.”

Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven and a few small fish.” Jesus again asks what they have.

Matt. 15:35 And he commanded the crowd to sit down upon the ground.

And he commanded the crowd to sit down upon the ground. Another feeding miracle is about to occur.

Matt. 15:36 Then he took seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them, and proceeded to give it to the disciples, and his disciples, in turn, to the crowd.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *proceeded to give* many manuscripts read *gave*. Many manuscripts read *to His disciples* rather than *to the disciples*

Then he took seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them, and proceeded to give it to the disciples, and his disciples, in turn, to the crowd. The use of the imperfect tense in Greek (continuous action in past time) shows that Jesus was continually giving the loaves and fish to His disciples and they were passing it out to the crowd.

Matt. 15:37 And they all ate, and were satisfied. And the leftovers they took up from the fragments were seven baskets full.

And they all ate, and were satisfied. And the leftovers they took up from the fragments were seven baskets full. Leftovers again.

Matt. 15:38 And those who had eaten were four thousand men, besides women and children.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *about* before *four thousand men*. Other manuscripts read *as* before *four thousand men*.

And those who had eaten were four thousand men, besides women and children. There are significant differences between the two feedings of the multitudes.

First, is the different number of loaves, baskets and people—though the overall scale is still vast.

Second, the use of the giving of thanks (Eucharist) makes the foreshadowing of the Lord's supper even more obvious.

Third, in this Gentile context a different word for basket is used. The word used for baskets in the feeding of the five thousand is typically associated with Jews.

Matt. 15:39 And after dismissing the crowds, he got into the boat and came unto the region of Magadan.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *Dalmanutha* instead of *Magadan*.

And after dismissing the crowds, he got into the boat and came unto the region of Magadan. After formally dismissing the crowd Jesus goes to the region of Magadan of which the exact location is unknown. Mark calls it Dalmanutha.

Summary to Chapter 15

After another confrontation with the religious leaders, Jesus moves to Gentile country. He heals the daughter of a Canaanite woman. Jesus then feeds another multitude by miraculous means. This group is made up of Gentiles rather than Jews. Matthew continues his emphasis that Jesus has come for more than the nation Israel, Jesus is the world's Savior.

**Matthew
Chapter 16**

This chapter marks a major turning point in the life and ministry of Jesus. After another confrontation with the religious rulers and warnings about them, Jesus goes to Caesarea Philippi where He reveals, for the first time, that He truly is the Messiah.

The Demand For A Sign (16:1-4)

The religious leaders now demand to see a sign from Jesus. Remember what He has already done (chapters 8 and 9).

Matt. 16:1 And the Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *they began to ask Him* instead of *they asked Him*.

And the Pharisees and Sadducees came up, He is now approached by these two sects. These two groups, ordinarily opposed to each other, unite in their opposition to Jesus.

and testing him They were tempting Him.

they asked him to show them a sign Their request for a sign was nothing innocent as they made it appear.

from heaven. This would be another way of saying “from God.” The Jews had the concept of three heavens. The first heaven would be the atmosphere above us (Job 35:5). The second heaven refers to the stellar heavens—the sun, moon and stars (Genesis 1). The third heaven speaks of the abode of God (2 Corinthians 12).

Matt. 16:2 And he answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have “*When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’*”

And he answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, He alludes to a popular weather proverb.

‘It will be fair weather, The signs in the sky which are factors that help predict the weather.

for the sky is red.’ We have a similar saying, “Red sky at night, take delight.”

Matt. 16:3 And in the morning, ‘Today will be bad weather, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have this verse.

And in the morning, ‘Today will be bad weather, Now the signs appear for bad weather.

for the sky is red and threatening.’ Similar to our saying, “Red sky in morning, time to take warning.”

You know how to discern the appearance of the sky, There is probably a play on words here between heaven and sky.

but you cannot discern the signs of the times. They can discern the signs in the physical heavens but not in the spiritual.

Matt. 16:4 An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” Then he left them and went away.

Note on a Variant Reading: After *Jonah* many manuscripts read *the prophet*.

An evil and adulterous generation He begins by condemning the people for their lack of belief. The idea of theirs being an evil generation is found throughout Matthew.

seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” This verse is almost verbatim with 12:39. The sign will be Jesus resurrection. That will be the one spectacular sign given to that generation.

Then he left them and went away. An abrupt end to the conversation.

Warnings Against The Religious Leaders (16:5-12)

Jesus now warns His disciples against the religious leaders.

Matt. 16:5 When his disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to bring bread.

Note on a Variant Reading: Some manuscripts read *the disciples* instead of *His disciples*.

When his disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to bring bread. They seemed to have come to a more deserted area where they would need to bring their own bread.

Matt. 16:6 And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware Jesus delivers a strong warning to them.

of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” This refers to the teaching of these two groups.

Matt. 16:7 And they began to discuss among themselves saying, “Is it because we did not bring any bread.”

Note on a Variant Reading: Some manuscripts read *then* rather than *And*.

And they began to discuss among themselves saying, As usual, they were not sure of the meaning of Jesus’ statement.

“Is it because we did not bring any bread.” They were thinking of natural bread which causes them to miss the point of Jesus’ words.

Matt. 16:8 But Jesus, aware of this, said, “You of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves that you do not have bread?”

Note on a Variant Reading: Many manuscripts read *you did not take* rather than *you do not have*.

Jesus knowing this said, “Why are you discussing among yourselves, ones of little faith, Their lack of faith is again attested to

that you do not have bread? They should not be distracted by the lack of physical bread, God is certainly able to take care of them..

Matt. 16:9 Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets did you take up?”

Do you not yet understand, Understanding is a key concept in Matthew (see chapter 13).

or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets did you take up?” He now refers to the two miraculous feedings they have just witnessed.

Matt. 16:10 or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets did you take up?

or the seven loaves of the four thousand, This is another confirmation that the two were separate events.

and how many baskets did you take up? He reminds them that He had done it twice.

Matt. 16:11 How could you fail to understand that I was not talking to you concerning bread? But to beware from the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees!

How could you fail to understand Jesus again expresses His disappointment with their lack of understanding.

that I was not talking to you concerning bread? But to beware from the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees! He was talking about a different kind of leaven.

Matt. 16:12 Then they understood that he had not told them to beware from the leaven of bread, but from the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *the Pharisees and Sadducees* some manuscripts read *the Pharisees*, others read *the Sadducees* while still others read both after *the leaven of bread*.

Then they understood Finally they understand the meaning of His statement.

that he had not told them to beware from the leaven of bread, but from the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. It was the teaching of these groups that they were to be concerned about.

The True Identity Of Jesus Confirmed— He Is The Christ (16:13-20)

Jesus, for the first time, will acknowledge that He is the Messiah—in a private meeting with His disciples.

Matt. 16:13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, he questioned his disciples saying, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read “*Who do people say that I the Son of Man am?*” rather than “*Who do the people say that the Son of Man is?*”

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus was now away from Galilean crowds at Caesarea Philippi—near the headwaters of the Jordan. This place was about twenty-five miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee. It was under the rulership of Herod Philip who renamed it Caesarea in honor of the Emperor.

The modern name for this place is Banias. The name was derived from a grotto underneath the mountain which was supposed to be the birthplace of the god Pan—the most famous fertility symbol in the ancient world. It is against this backdrop that Jesus will assert His own authority. Therefore the place He chose to ask the question about His identity was of utmost significance.

he questioned his disciples saying, He is now going to ask them a question.

“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” This is the question that had been on the minds of all the people from the beginning of His ministry. What is the pulse of the people?

Matt. 16:14 And they said, “Some John the Baptist; and others Elijah; but still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

And they said, “Some John the Baptist; Like Herod Antipas they thought John had risen from the dead. Obviously there was something about Jesus that reminded them of John the Baptist.

and others Elijah; Others thought that He was Elijah, a prophet the Old Testament said would prepare the way for the Messiah (cf. Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6). John the Baptist, as we have noted, had many things in common with Elijah. Jesus was also mistaken for Elijah.

but still others Jeremiah Some thought Jeremiah would play a key role in the appearance of the Messiah. He was a prophet of judgment who had been persecuted by the leaders. There may have been something about the character of Jesus that reminded them of Jeremiah.

or one of the prophets.” This points to the widespread view that the greatest figures of the Old Testament would return just before the end of the age.

Matt. 16:15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *He said* some manuscripts read *Jesus said*.

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Now He personalizes the question. God does the same thing to all of us!

Matt. 16:16 Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, Peter answers for himself as well as for the group. The title “Christ” has only occurred in Matthew’s editorial words and not in direct speech.

the Son Jesus is the Son of God in the sense that He is somehow intimately related to God.

of the living God.” This went beyond a nationalistic fervor for the Messiah. *Living God* is contrasted to Pan—a non-living god.

Matt. 16:17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you Jesus acknowledges the confession.

Simon, son of Jonah, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, Understanding the nature of Jesus is not gained through any human agency

but my Father who is in heaven. Rather it comes through divine revelation.

Matt. 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

And I also say to you Now Jesus will return the favor.

that you are Peter, and upon this rock The famous rock passage. This verse has rightly been described as among the most controversial in all of Scripture. As Peter made a declaration toward Jesus, now Jesus makes a declaration toward Peter (see question at the end of this chapter).

Many commentators argue that the most natural understanding of the passage is that

1. Peter is the rock upon which the church is to be built. This view, however, by no means affirms the papacy or to denies that the church, like the apostles, rests upon Jesus as the bedrock of its existence. Jesus is, after all, the builder and all the apostles do what they do through Him.
2. A popular view is that the rock is Peter's confession of Christ, rather than Peter himself.
3. Another view sees the rock as the teachings of Christ that He had previously referred to (7:24). Whatever view is taken, this passage, along with the rest of the New Testament, gives no basis that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome to be followed by successors.

There is also a play on words with rock.

I will build my church, The church is yet something to be built.

and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. This phrase appears in the Old Testament (Job 38:17; Psalm 9:13; 107:18; Isaiah 38:10). It also appears in other Jewish literature (Wisdom 16:13; 3 Maccabees 5:51; Psalms of Solomon 16:2). This phrase is also found in Greek literature. Keener writes:

The gates of the realm of the dead appear widely in ancient Near Eastern literature, but the image here may especially evoke Isaiah 28:15-19, where the cornerstone in Zion withstands the assault of water from those in the covenant with Sheol (Keener, p. 271).

The gates of Hades are often thought of as the organized powers of evil which dwell in Hades. It has led to a number of different interpretations among scholars. Leon Morris says:

The word *gate* is normally used in the New Testament for some impressive gate, such as the gate of a city (Luke 7:12), of the temple (Acts 3:10), or of

a prison (Acts 12:10); it may indicate the gate to life (7:13-14). *Hades* is the underworld, the place of the dead; it may be contrasted to heaven (11:23). That the gates will not overpower the church is a little puzzling, since we think of gates as part of the defense rather than a weapon of offense. But gates were important parts of fortifications in the first century and were usually flanked by bastions. Wooden gates would be overlain with bronze. They thus lend themselves to the imagery of strength. The gates of Hades were probably regarded as especially strong (did not they keep in all the dead?). Their expression may of course be metaphorical cf. “powers of death REB). Jesus is then saying that the gates of Hades are not strong enough to prevail against the church; the church will never die. There may also be the thought that though Hades is strong and the dead do not come back from it, it is not strong enough to contain Jesus and it is not strong enough to contain the Christian dead. Whether we can understand all the detailed imagery or not, it is clear that Jesus is giving his followers the assurance that nothing in this world or the next can overthrow the church (Morris, p. 425).

A.H. McNeile believes the phrase speaks only of death.

It is doubtful that Hades was ever thought of as the *abode* of the powers of evil, from which they emerge to injure men. In 11:23 (Luke 10:15) it symbolizes punitive destruction, in Luke 16:23 an intermediate state of punishment, and in Acts 2:27,31 it is the state of the departed generally, i.e. death; in Revelation (1:18, 6:8, 20:13 ff.) it is always coupled with death. In the O.T. the ‘gates of Hades (Sheol)’ never bears any other meaning . . . The *ecclesia* [church] is built upon the Messiahship of her Master, and death, the Gate of Hades, will not prevail against her by keeping Him imprisoned. It was a mysterious truth, which He was soon to tell them in plain language (v.21) (McNeile, p 242).

Matt. 16:19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on the earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

And I will give you The *you* here is singular, referring to Peter

the keys of the kingdom of heaven; Peter will be given custody of the authority of Christ symbolized by the keys of the kingdom of heaven. He is the one who opened the door of the gospel to the Jews (Acts 2) and the Gentiles (Acts 10). (See question at the end of the chapter).

whatever you bind on the earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth be loosed in heaven. It is not that heaven will ratify Peter’s decisions, it is that Peter’s decisions have already been ratified in heaven. Binding and loosing speaks of authority.

Matt. 16:20 Then he warned His disciples not to tell anyone that he himself was the Christ.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *rebuked* instead of *warned* Some manuscripts have *Jesus* before *the Christ*.

Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he himself was the Christ. Jesus demands silence, for His time had not yet come. The term Messiah, loaded with all sorts of different meanings than what Jesus meant it to be, was not to be used at this time.

Jesus' First Prediction Of His Death And Resurrection (16:21)

After acknowledging that He is the Messiah, Jesus now predicts His death and resurrection.

Matt. 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders, the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts have *Christ* after *Jesus*. A few manuscripts have He began rather than *Jesus began*. Some manuscripts have *of the people* after *scribes*. Instead of *on the third day* a few manuscripts read *after three days*.

From that time This marks a major turning point in the ministry of Jesus.

Jesus began to show his disciples This is one of several predictions of His passion.

that he must go to Jerusalem, Jesus Himself testified that it is not right for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.

and suffer many things from the elders, the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, The Messiahship that Peter declared will be different from the one they expected. Now we have the first announcement of the suffering and death of the Messiah.

and be raised up on the third day. Again we have the emphasis on the third day.

Peter Rebukes Jesus (16:22)

Peter feels that he must rebuke Jesus for talking about dying.

Matt. 16:22 And Peter took him alongside and began to rebuke him saying, "May it never be to you, Lord! This thing will not happen to you!"

Note on a variant reading: A couple of manuscripts (including Vaticanus) reads *he said to Him rebuking* rather than *began to rebuke Him*.

And Peter took him alongside Jesus statement was totally incomprehensible to Peter.

and began to rebuke him Peter feels he is now in a position to rebuke the Lord!

saying, “May it never be to you, Lord! This thing will not happen to you!” It did not fit Peter’s view as to his confession of Jesus being the Messiah.

Jesus Rebukes Peter (16:23)

Jesus, in turn, rebukes Peter for his statement.

Matt. 16:23 But he turned and said to Peter, “Go behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but the things of men.”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *but the things of men* a few manuscripts read *the thing of a man*.

But he turned and said to Peter, “Go behind me, Satan! Jesus will show where this idea came from.

You are a stumbling block to me; The idea of averting the cross is an offense to the program of God.

for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, Peter had his mind on earthly rather than heavenly things.

but the things of men.” Opposing the death of Jesus is opposing the will of God.

Instructions On True Discipleship (16:24-28)

Jesus shows that a true disciple will deny his own self-interests and be more concerned with the interests of the kingdom.

Matt. 16:24 The Jesus said to his disciples, “If any one wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross and follow me.

The Jesus said to his disciples, “If any one wishes to come after me, Jesus is now going to speak of the cost of discipleship.

let him deny himself, We deny our self-centeredness.

and let him take up his cross and follow me. Following Jesus means denying our self-centeredness.

Matt. 16:25 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, and whoever wishes to lose his life for my sake will find it.

For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, and whoever wishes to lose his life for my sake will find it. The irony of the gospel.

Matt. 16:26 For what benefit will it be for a man, if he gains the entire world, but forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *what is it benefiting* (present tense) rather than *what benefit will it be* (future tense).

For what benefit will it be for a man, if he gains the entire world, but forfeits his soul? The answer is obvious, it will benefit him nothing.

Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? This is a profound truth and something well worth thinking about.

Matt. 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will repay to each person according to his work.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *according to his works* rather than *according to his work*.

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will repay to each person according to his work. Jesus must come into His Father's glory before He can judge mankind.

Matt. 16:28 For truly I say to you, that there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts do not have *that*.

For truly I say to you, that there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. This statement has been interpreted in various ways. It refers either to

1. The Second Coming Of Christ

This view understands Jesus to have been mistaken about the time of His coming. He assumed it would have been in the same generation. The mistake is attributed to Jesus' humanity. However, the evidence is clearly against this being the proper interpretation.

2. The Transfiguration

A popular view is that it refers to the transfiguration, which is recorded in the next chapter. Without the chapter break this is the obvious answer to the question.

3. The Death Of Jesus

The power of sin was broken at the death of Christ on Calvary's cross and some commentators see this as a fulfillment of Jesus' coming.

4. The Resurrection Of Jesus

The power of death was broken at Christ's resurrection. Some see His statement here referring to that event.

5. The Day Of Pentecost

When the Holy Spirit came down on the Day of Pentecost it inaugurated a new age. This is a possible explanation of Jesus' statement here.

6. The Destruction Of Jerusalem

A view that many people accept is that this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

7. No One Specific Event

Some commentators see this as not referring to any one specific event in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Summary to Chapter 16

This chapter marks another major transition in the gospel of Matthew. Jesus has further confrontations with the religious leaders—this time over the demand for a sign. Jesus then warns His disciples about doctrine of the religious leaders.

At Caesarea Philippi, a turning point occurs. Jesus asks for a confessional statement from His disciples. First, who does the crowd say that He is? After they give a variety of answers Jesus then personalizes the question. Who do they say that He is? Peter, speaking for the groups confesses that He is the Messiah, the Son of God.

Jesus acknowledges Peter's confession and promises Him the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

After this memorable announcement Jesus then stuns His followers by predicting His death. Peter rebukes Jesus for saying this and Jesus in turns rebukes Peter.

Jesus then speaks of denying oneself and following Him.

The chapter ends with Jesus' statement about certain of His disciples not seeing death until they see His kingdom.

**Matthew
Chapter 17**

All three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) preserve the following order of events.

- (1) The confession at Caesarea Philippi
- (2) The announcement of Jesus suffering and death with the following statement about true discipleship
- (3) The transfiguration immediately after that (Matthew, Mark only)
- (4) A repetition of the prophecy about the suffering of the Son of Man

The Transfiguration Of Jesus (17:1-9)

Jesus is transfigured before a small group of His disciples. Moses and Elijah appear with Him on the mountain.

Matt. 17:1 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John his brother, and brought them into a high mountain by themselves.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts have *it came about* before *after six days*. Instead of *by themselves* one manuscript and one church father has *exceedingly high*.

And after six days Matthew gives an exceptionally precise time as to this event. It may allude to Exodus 24:12-18 where Moses sees the glory of the Lord on the mountain and on the seventh day hears the voice of God.

Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John his brother, and brought them into a high mountain by themselves. Jesus takes the inner circles of His disciples with Him. These three are again privileged to accompany Jesus at Gethsemane (26:37). The fact that Jesus restricts this event to a special core of disciples illustrates its unique character and the need to keep it secret (cf. v. 9). These three witnessed the glory of Jesus alone. In the same manner Jesus had given the special knowledge that He was going to die only to the twelve disciples and not to the multitudes. We also have a comparison to Moses (see Exodus 24:1,9 where Moses took three close co-workers with him (Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu).

Matt. 17:2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *Jesus was transfigured* instead of *He was transfigured*. Some manuscripts read *as snow* instead of *as the light*.

And he was transfigured before them, His physical appearance was dramatically altered or transformed (Greek *metamorphis*). The term occurs in

the physical sense only here and in the parallel in Mark; in a spiritual sense in Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18 (which has a possible connection to the transfiguration story). What happened to Jesus is spelled out only in partial detail.

and his face shone like the sun, The same expression is used of the righteous in the kingdom following judgment (13:43). See also the account of Moses' face in Exodus 34:29-35. Jewish readers would certainly make this connection.

and his clothes became as white as the light. The whiteness of the angel's clothing in 28:3, white as snow. The disciples see Jesus as they had never seen Him before and it must have reminded them of the stories they had read about Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24).

Matt. 17:3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with him.

And behold, Moses Now another remarkable thing occurs. Two of the most important figures in the Old Testament appear and converse with Jesus. Moses, who represents the law, appears with Jesus.

and Elijah Also Elijah, the one who represented the prophets.

appeared to them, The fact of their appearance is given, what they looked like is not. Neither are we told how these two men, long passed from the scene were able to appear in this present world.

talking with him. Moses and Elijah represent the law and the prophets and perhaps the end of the age (cf. vs. 10). Both Moses and Elijah were both associated with Mount Sinai, the mountain of revelation (for Elijah 1 Kings 19:8, "Horeb the mountain of God"). Luke tells us their discussion centered around Jesus upcoming death in Jerusalem.

Matt. 17:4 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will make here three tabernacles, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *do you wish* instead of *if you wish*. Instead *I will make here* some manuscripts read *let us make*.

And Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. Peter's suggestion, for whatever reason, was a serious mistake. Apparently he felt some response was called for. He began with a lame statement about it being good or advantageous for them to be there.

If you wish, I will make here three tabernacles, Peter makes the mistake of focusing on all three participants rather than Jesus, who was the object of this divine splendor. He proposed to put up three tents—probably little huts made of branches, the purpose of which is unknown.

one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” Some have thought they were for hospitality, or overnight lodging. It is also possible that they would be some type of shrine similar to the Old Testament tent of meeting or tabernacle. The shrine would represent the communion of heaven and earth. There is no indication, as some have suggested, that this happened in the autumn harvest festival in commemoration of the wilderness wanderings. No time of the year is given. Furthermore, it is difficult to suppose that Jesus would have traveled with His disciples to the mountain during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Matt. 17:5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him.”

While he was still speaking, As Peter was speaking another remarkable event occurred.

behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; The cloud spoke of the Shekinah glory, the very presence of God. The same Greek words are used in the LXX to describe the presence of the Lord in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:35).

and behold, a voice out of the cloud A third startling occurrence, the voice from the cloud.

said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him.” The words of the Father are the exact same as 3:17 when Jesus was being baptized, with one addition—listen to Him. The point is that Peter should listen to Jesus—Moses and Elijah are His attendants. Jesus Himself is going to accomplish God’s saving purpose by dying for the sins of the world. In the parallel passage in Luke (9:31) we are told that they were discussing Jesus’ upcoming death in Jerusalem. Therefore in the midst of the supreme exaltation of Jesus the divine voice alludes to the fact of His upcoming suffering.

Matt. 17:6 And when the disciples heard this, they fell upon their faces and were greatly afraid.

And when the disciples heard this, they fell upon their faces They fell upon their faces, probably partly from fear, and partly as a sign of worship.

and were greatly afraid. Note the disciples were terrified when they heard the divine voice—not when they saw Jesus transfigured, not when Moses and Elijah appeared with Him. It was the voice of God the Father that caused them to fear greatly.

Matt. 17:7 And Jesus came and touched them and said, “Rise up, and do not be afraid.”

And Jesus came and touched them and said, “Rise up, and do not be afraid.” As always, Jesus tells His fearful disciples not to be afraid. The

purpose of Him touching them reinforces the fact that they actually saw a real event, rather than they experiencing some illusion or hallucination.

Matt. 17:8 When they looked up, they saw no one, except Jesus himself alone.

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts do not read *Himself*.

When they looked up, they saw no one, The final verse again brings the emphasis to Jesus.

except Jesus himself alone. *Himself* is emphatic in the Greek. Moses and Elijah had played their respective roles in the history of salvation, but now they must yield to Jesus.

Matt. 17:9 And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

And as they were coming down from the mountain, Now as they are leaving the scene of this unknown mountain, Jesus will have something to say to them.

Jesus commanded them, He now ordered them to be silent concerning this event.

saying, “Tell the vision The commanded is again for secrecy. The word *vision* has the idea of a supernatural event, not in the sense of something they just imagined.

to no one This includes the other disciples.

until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” Why did He tell them to keep silent until after the resurrection?

The Discussion About Elijah (17:10-13)

After the appearance of Elijah with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, the discussion turns to Elijah's coming to the earth.

Matt. 17:10 And the disciples asked him, saying, “Why, then, do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *His disciples*.

And the disciples asked him, saying, “Why, then, do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” With the sight of Moses and Elijah fresh in their minds, they ask why must Elijah come back before the Day of the Lord (Malachi 3:22).

Matt. 17:11 And he answered and said, “Elijah is indeed coming, and will restore all things.

Note on variant readings: Many manuscripts have *Jesus answered*. After *coming* many manuscripts read *first*.

And He answered and said, “Elijah is indeed coming, and will restore all things. Jesus responds by alluding to the same passage. He agrees with the scribes that Elijah must come first. The restoration is probably referring to the repentance of the people before the time of the Messiah.

Matt. 17:12 But I say to you, that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they did to him whatever they wished. In the same way, the Son of Man also is about to suffer at their hands.

But I say to you, that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, The scribes were correct in thinking Elijah had to come but Jesus flatly states that Elijah has already come (John the Baptist) but they did not recognize him (see question at the end of the chapter concerning the relationship between John the Baptist and Elijah).

but they did to him whatever they wished. In the same way, the Son of Man also is about to suffer at their hands. The fate of John and the fate of Jesus is now linked. John and Jesus was largely unrecognized by the people and they both will suffer at the people’s hands. John had already suffered and Jesus, at this juncture, makes another prediction of His own suffering. If they did not recognize John the forerunner of the Messiah, they certainly were not going to recognize the Messiah Himself.

Matt. 17:13 Then the disciples understood that he had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

Then the disciples understood that he had spoken to them about John the Baptist. This jogged their memory. If John was Elijah who was to come, then Jesus is the one whom John prepared the way. The proper identification of John leads to the proper identification of Jesus.

The Epileptic Boy And The Disciples Lack Of Faith (17:14-21)

As they return from the mountain, Jesus and His small band of disciples encounter a man who had brought his son to the remaining disciples, yet they were unable to heal him. This brings about a discussion of faith.

Matt. 17:14 And when they came toward the crowd, a man came up, falling on his knees before him, and saying,

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts read *He came*.

And when they came toward the crowd, a man came up, falling on his knees before him, and saying, When Jesus and His three disciples come down from the mountain they encounter a crowd. The same man who approached Jesus disciples for a healing miracle is now going to approach Jesus.

Matt. 17:15 “Lord, have mercy upon my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; for often times he falls into the fire, and often times into the water.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *he suffers terribly* some manuscripts read *He is sick* (literally *he has it badly*).

“Lord, have mercy upon my son, for he is an epileptic The word translated *epileptic* is literally “moonstruck.” We are going to discover that the actual cause of his problem was demon possession.

and he suffers terribly; for often times he falls into the fire, and often times into the water. Obviously the boy had a serious lack of control of his motor functions which would repeatedly put his life in danger.

Matt. 17:16 And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.

And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.
The disciples were unable to help.

Matt. 17:17 Jesus answered and said, “O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to me.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *evil* instead of *unbelieving*.

Jesus answered and said, “O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to me.” Jesus’ lament is not with the man, for he certainly had faith, or even with His disciples but more with the unbelieving crowd who had become involved. The disciples appear to have been affected by the unbelief of the crowd. The disciples will receive their own rebuke (vs. 20).

Matt. 17:18 And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out from him, and the child was healed from that moment.

And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out from him. and the child was healed from that moment. Note the cause of the problem was demon possession. The object of Jesus’ rebuke is ambiguous: it could be the boy or the demon. Mark makes it clear that Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit (9:25).

Matt. 17:19 Then the disciples came to him privately and said, “Why could we not drive it out?”

Then the disciples came to him privately and said, “Why could we not drive it out?” The *we* is emphasized in the Greek text. Jesus had undoubtedly given them authority over the demons (10:1,8) and they had undoubtedly performed numerous exorcisms. Why not this time?

Matt. 17:20 And he said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, “Move from here to there, and it will be move; and nothing will be impossible for you.”

Note on variant readings: Many manuscripts have *Jesus said*. Instead of *little faith* some manuscripts read *unbelief*.

And he said to them, “Because of your little faith. The problem was not a total lack of faith, but rather a small amount of faith. In this case, with the doubting crowd and the extreme symptoms displayed by the boy, the disciples had their confidence shaken.

For truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, Again the mustard seed is used to represent the smallest of all seeds

you can say to this mountain, “Move from here to there, and it will be move; A small amount of faith has unlimited potential when that faith is directed toward God.

and nothing will be impossible for you.” In this context it refers to the signs of the kingdom that the disciples were commissioned to perform in chapter 10.

Matt. 17:21 But this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting.

Note on a variant reading: Verse 21 is omitted in some manuscripts. Many translations do not put it in the text or they place it in the text with brackets around it.

The Second Prediction Of Jesus’ Death And Resurrection (17:22-23)

Jesus again predicts His passion and His resurrection.

Matt. 17:22 And as they were gathering around him in the Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *were staying* instead of *were gathering around Him*.

And as they were gathering around him in the Galilee, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. Here we have another prediction of His upcoming death.

Matt. 17:23 And they will kill him, and he will be raised upon the third day.” And they were exceedingly sad.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *upon the third day* a few manuscripts have *after three days*. A few manuscripts do not have *and they were exceedingly sad*.

And they will kill him, and he will be raised upon the third day.” The third day is mentioned again as the day in which He will be raised.

And they were exceedingly sad. Though they were very sad, they do not seem to grasp the idea of what He is saying. “They could understand Jesus being put to death, but apparently they were incapable of grasping the promise of resurrection” (Mounce, p. 170).

The Question Of The Poll Tax (17:24-27)

As they reach Capernaum, Jesus is confronted with the issue of the hated poll-tax.

Matt. 17:24 And when they had come into Capernaum, the ones receiving the temple tax came to Peter and said, “Your teacher pays the temple tax, doesn’t he?”

And when they had come into Capernaum, This is the last visit to Capernaum and again the group is apparently living at Peter’s home.

the ones receiving the temple tax came to Peter and said, Consequently the tax collectors come to Peter as the head of the house although they recognize Jesus as the teacher.

“Your teacher pays the temple tax, doesn’t he?” The temple tax was an annual half shekel tax (based upon Exodus 30:11-16, though it was not commanded as a regular payment) which was paid for the upkeep of worship in the temple by most adult male Jews, whether they lived in Israel or not. Unlike Roman taxes, it was a matter of patriotic pride. It was also a matter of controversy, as the Sadducees disapproved of the tax, and the men who lived at Qumran (where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found) paid it only once in a lifetime. So they wanted to know Jesus’ attitude toward this issue. Would He take an independent line and thus alienate the majority of patriotic Jews? Rabbis were exempt from paying the temple tax and so were the priests in Jerusalem. Would Jesus claim a similar exemption?

Matt. 17:25 He said, “Yes.” And when they had come into the house Jesus spoke of it first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth receive tax or tribute? From their sons or from the foreigners?”

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *and when He had come*.

He said, “Yes.” And when they had come into the house Jesus spoke of it first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth receive tax or tribute? From their sons or from the foreigners?” Jesus must have overheard the previous conversation. His

analogy does not equate the temple tax with the toll or tribute exacted by the imperial power, but simply explores the basis of any taxation.

Matt. 17:26 And when he said, “From the foreigners,” Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are exempt.

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *and Peter said* rather than *and when He said*.

And when he said, “From the foreigners,” Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are exempt. The point is that kings don’t tax their own family, they tax all the others. This, however, is God’s tax so God’s Son is not obligated in paying it. This seems to be the logic here though it is not directly stated. However, the underlying principle has already been stated, “One greater than the temple is here” (12:5,6). Temple worship will soon be abandoned with the worship of Christ who fulfilled what the temple services were all about.

Matt. 17:27 But lest we offend them, go unto the sea and throw out a fish hook; and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a stater. Take it and give to them for me and for you.”

Note on a variant reading: After *stater* a few manuscripts have *there*.

But lest we offend them, Jesus response to the issue will not be offensive to the patriotic Jews. He asserts that He is not obliged to pay it, but is prepared to do so to avoid giving offense which might unnecessarily prejudice His mission.

go unto the sea and throw out a fish hook; and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a stater. Take it and give to them for me and for you.” This episode has caused a lot of interesting interpretations among Bible commentators. Peter is told to go find the money in the mouth of the fish! But we are not told that he did so. Some commentators assume that Jesus was making a playful comment on the lack of money of Himself and His disciples. The point of the story is that Jesus did indeed pay the tax although He made it clear that He did not have to. The miracle of the coin in the mouth of the fish is not the main point of the story. Jesus is teaching us that He was willing to comply with the rules of society rather than causing an unnecessary offense, a principle that has wider application than the specific issue of the temple tax.

After the year A.D. 70 when the temple was destroyed the Romans diverted the tax to the temple of Jupiter in Rome, after which it ceased to be a matter of patriotism and became a symbol of their subjection to pagan power; the fact that the story is recorded is one of the incidental indications that Matthew’s gospel should be dated before A.D. 70.

Summary to Chapter 17

Chapter 17 begins with the Transfiguration of Jesus. Moses and Elijah appear with Him on the mountain viewed by a few selected disciples of Jesus. When the disciples look up they see Jesus only. Jesus warns these disciples not to tell anyone of this event until after His resurrection.

When they return they find an epileptic child whom the remaining disciples are unable to heal. Jesus criticizes the faith of His disciples for not being able to heal the child.

Jesus, for the second time, predicts His death and resurrection. As was true with the first prediction, He told only His disciples not the crowds.

The chapter ends with the miracle of the coin in the mouth of the fish.

**Matthew
Chapter 18**

Jesus continues to teach His disciples on the precepts of the kingdom. After speaking about humility Jesus warns those individuals who cause believers to sin. He then lays down the process of confronting a sinful believer.

Jesus Teaches On Humility (18:1-5)

The disciples are thinking about greatness in the kingdom and Jesus explains to them what true greatness is.

Matt. 18:1 At that time the disciples came Jesus, saying, “Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *at that time* some manuscripts read *in that day*.

At that time the disciples came Jesus, This relates the discussion with previous chapter.

saying, “Who then The question of the disciples begins in the Greek text with a particle meaning “so.” This relates back to Jesus words in 17:25,26.

is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” This is not dealing with the future, they wanted to know who *presently* is the greatest in the kingdom. Since Jesus has a special relationship with the “king” of heaven, they want to know how do the authority structures in the new kingdom of heaven compare to the kings of the earth? Human societies treat rank very seriously; how is this issue to be treated in God’s society? On what basis does God evaluate people? The answer Jesus will give shows that the disciples thought of greatness in terms of position, power and glory rather than in the terms of righteousness, as greatness in the kingdom had earlier been defined (5:19).

Matt. 18:2 And he called a child, and stood him among them.

And he called a child, and stood him among them. By placing a child in their midst, Jesus gives substance to what He is about to teach. He gives a graphic and radical answer—the total reverse of human value scales. A child was a person of no importance in Jewish society, he was subject to the authority of the elders, and was not taken seriously. He was one who was to be looked after, not to be looked up to.

Matt. 18:3 And he said, “Truly I say to you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

And He said, “Truly I say to you, Another one of Jesus’ solemn statements.

unless you change This is a radical reorientation of priorities and values. The KJV translation “be converted” is not correct if it suggests a technical theological meaning for the verb which simply means “to turn.” However, it points appropriately to the radical nature of the change involved (cf. John 3:3 for a similar image). They must repent, they must change their ways.

and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. They must become as children. It seems that the status of the child is the point rather than the supposed characteristics of children (humble, innocent, receptive and trustful). Contrary to the world’s standards, they must have a childlike indifference to greatness.

Matt. 18:4 Therefore whoever will humble himself as this little child, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore whoever will humble himself This refers to self-humbling, not being humbled.

as this little child, Humble oneself to the status of a child.

is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The emphasis is now made explicit. The child’s humility is in his lack of status. True greatness is found in being little, true importance in being unimpressive. That is how the kingdom of heaven looks at the world’s scale of values.

Humbling oneself does not refer to an ascetic lifestyle or a phony false modesty; it does not describe a character trait; it is the acceptance of an inferior position as Jesus accepted, (see Philippians 2:8, where the same phrase is used).

Matt. 18:5 And whoever will receive one such child in my name, receives me.

And whoever will receive one such child in my name, The name of Jesus refers to the authority of Jesus.

receives me. The child represents the “little ones” (the insignificant believers) of verses 6,10,14. Not a reference to children as such, but to those who follow Jesus and have accepted the child’s status. The greatness of such children lies in their relationship to Jesus (cf 25:31-46 for the principle of receiving Jesus in receiving His “little ones”). One application of this principle may be church leaders accepting the “average” Christian, especially the youth, as their equal.

Jesus Warns About Causing Others To Sin (18:6-11)

Jesus has some stern words about those who cause others to sin. It can result in their damnation.

Matt. 18:6 Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a large millstone around his neck, and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Whoever causes one of these little ones The little ones here are not necessarily only the less important or the more vulnerable members of the congregation, though what it says here particularly applies to them.

who believe in me to stumble, These sayings are linked together by the words *scandalize* (“cause to sin,” verses 6,8,9) and *skandilon* (“offenses” or “stumbling blocks,” three times in verse 7). Disciples are vulnerable and stumbling blocks are a real danger.

The transition from the child, who formed the illustration in vs 2-4 to the little ones is now complete. Similar language is used of Jesus disciples in 10:42 and 11:25, and it will be taken up with *the least* of 25:40,45. This is how they appear in the world’s eyes, weak and insignificant.

it would be better for him to have a large millstone around his neck, and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Anyone who causes a stumbling block for a believer it would be better that he have a quick drowning, than the judgment that God has in store.

Matt. 18:7 Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is necessary for the stumbling blocks to come; but woe to the one whom the stumbling block comes!

Woe to the world The world now is the subject of Jesus’ condemnation.

because of its stumbling blocks! These are things that cause offense.

For it is necessary for the stumbling blocks to come; but woe to the one whom the stumbling block comes! The offenses will continue as long as we remain in the world..

Matt. 18:8 But if your right hand or foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; for it is better to enter into life lame or maimed than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire.

But if your right hand or foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; for it is better to enter into life lame or maimed than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. We have virtually the same saying in 5:29,30. It is a warning about things that stumble disciples in their following of Christ.

Matt. 18:9 And if your eye causes you to stumble, take it out and throw it away. For it is better to enter into life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the gehenna of fire.

And if your eye causes you to stumble, An example of things that cause the believer to be offended.

take it out and throw it away. For it is better to enter into life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the gehenna of fire. Notice again the emphasis on things that offend or scandalize believers.

Matt. 18:10 See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually see the face of my Father who is in heaven.

See that you do not despise one of these little ones; To despise the “little ones” shows that a person has missed the concept of true greatness. It is also to part company with God the Father to whom everyone is important.

for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually see the face of my Father who is in heaven. In Daniel 10 and 12:1 angels are spoken of as heavenly representatives of nations and in Revelation 1:20 as representatives of churches. Here we have individuals who have their heavenly representative. Even the least of the little ones has constant access to God.

Matt. 18:11 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Note on a variant reading: This verse is not found in some manuscripts and is omitted or bracketed in many translations (see Luke 19:10). Textual scholar Bruce Metzger notes.

There can be little doubt that the words . . . are spurious here, being omitted by the earliest witnesses representing several different textual types . . . and manifestly borrowed from copyists from Lk 19:10. The reason for the interpolation was apparently to provide a connection between ver. 10 and verses 12-14 (Metzger, p. 36).

The Lost Sheep (18:12-14)

Jesus shows God’s feeling for those who are lost—comparing them to sheep.

Matt. 18:12 What do you think? If any man has one hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, he will leave the ninety-nine on the mountain, will he not, and go and look for the one that is straying?

What do you think? If any man has one hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, he will leave the ninety-nine on the mountain, will he not, and go and look for the one that is straying? As usual, Jesus draws an example from real life.

Matt. 18:13 And if he finds it, truly I say to you, that he will rejoice over it more than the ninety-nine which did not wander astray.

And if he finds it, truly I say to you, that he will rejoice over it more than the ninety-nine which did not wander astray. The rejoicing is for the lost one found, not the ones still at home.

Matt. 18:14 In the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that any of these little ones should perish.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *My heavenly Father* instead of *your heavenly Father*.

In the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that any of these little ones should perish. As God cares for each of these little sheep, so should we. The following verses shows what this means in practice.

The Process Of Confronting A Sinful Believer (18:15-17)

Jesus gives a 3 step program on confronting believers who sin.

Matt. 18:15 And if your brother sins [against you,] go and show him his fault, between you and him alone. And if he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the words *against you*.

And if your brother sins [against you,] go and show him his fault, between you and him alone. And if he listens to you, you have gained your brother. The reference to “your brother” refers to conduct within the community of believers. The word *you* is singular, referring to one brother who sins against another brother. The disciple is not to ignore the fault of another disciple but rather confront him in love with the hope that he will repent. Notice it is between you and him alone, it is the concern of no one else! This is private confrontation if someone is involved in open, public, serious sin (1 Corinthians 5:11). We convince him of his sin. Love disciplines

Three points need to be emphasized: (1) Do not do it if you enjoy it! (2) The object is to restore your brother. (3) Prepare to be misunderstood.

Matt. 18:16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two people with you, so that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter may be established.

But if he does not listen to you, take one or two people with you, so that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter may be established. If he does not listen, the next step is to take someone else with you (see Deuteronomy 19:15). or two people helps check out the validity of the accusation.

Matt. 18:17 But if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen to the church, let him be to you a Gentile and a tax-collector.

And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; The final step is before the congregation. The local assembly has authority over its

members. The assembly has power, not the preacher or the pope. The local assembly has power of *its* members, *not* the unsaved.

and if he refuses to listen to the church, If he refuses to listen to the congregation, then he should be avoided by them until he repents. There is unlimited forgiveness for those who repent (Ephesians 4:32). We are to put up with one another and strive for unity.

let him be to you a Gentile and a tax-collector. The gentile and the tax collector were proverbial people whom the good Jews kept their distance. While Jesus accepted both gentiles and tax collectors into His kingdom, He is using this phrase to refer to someone who is ostracized from the congregation—someone who the congregation is to avoid.

The Authority Of The Church (18:18-20)

Jesus lists the authority of the church in this matter of confrontation.

Matt. 18:18 Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on the earth will have already been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have already been loosed in heaven.

Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on the earth will have already been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have already been loosed in heaven. In some translations of this verse it sounds like Jesus promised His disciples whatever they bound on earth would be bound in heaven and whatever they loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven. In other words, they had the authority to bind and loose and God would simply back up what they decreed. However, the issue is not quite that simple.

In the Greek text, the words are “future perfect passives” which could be translated “whatsoever you bind on the earth will have already been bound in heaven,” and “whatever you loose on earth will have already been loosed in heaven.” In other words, the heavenly decree comes *before* the earthly decree. This is the language of the law court. Jewish legal issues in Jesus’ day were normally decided in the synagogue community and later by Rabbi’s. Many Jewish people believed the authority of heaven stood behind the earthly judges when they decided a case based upon a correct understanding of God’s law (this process came to be known as “binding and loosing”). Jesus’ contemporaries often envisioned God’s justice in terms of a heavenly court; by obeying God’s law the earthly court ratified the decrees of the heavenly court.

In Matthew 18:15-20 Christians who follow the careful procedures of verses 15-17 may be assured that they have the authority of the court of God when they decide cases. The application is clear: when a person refuses to turn from his sin after loving confrontation, the church by disciplining that individual already recognizes the spiritual reality that was true in God’s sight.

Matt. 18:19 Again, truly I say to you, that if two among you on the earth agree about anything which you ask, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *truly*.

Again, truly I say to you, that if two among you on the earth agree about anything which you ask, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven. This echoes what He has just said. The decisions on earth will be ratified in heaven.

Matt. 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst.”

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst.” The promise can be applied when only two or three gather in *His* name. When they gather in His name, He is part of the gathering.

Unlimited Forgiveness (18:21-22)

Jesus shows that forgiveness should be unlimited when it is based upon repentance.

Matt. 18:21 Then Peter came to Jesus and said to him, “Lord how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up until seven times?

Then Peter came to Jesus and said to him, “Lord how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up until seven times? The Rabbi’s discussed this issue and concluded three times was sufficient. Peter is being generous in saying seven times.

Matt. 18:22 Jesus answered and said to him, “I tell you, not until seven times, but until seventy seven times.”

Jesus answered and said to him, “I tell you, not until seven times, but until seventy seven times.” Jesus’ reply does away with all limits and calculations. NRSV has seventy seven times following Genesis 4:24.

The Parable Of The Two Debtors (18:23-35)

Jesus now gives a negative illustration with respect to forgiveness.

Matt. 18:23 For this reason, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.

For this reason, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. The reason why forgiveness is unlimited is explained in this parable. A certain king wanted to settle the outstanding accounts of his subjects.

Matt. 18:24 And when he began to settle them, one who owed ten thousand talents was brought to him.

And when he began to settle them, As he is in the process of settling these account a certain man will be brought to him.

one who owed ten thousand talents was brought to him. The talent was the highest form of Greek currency. This would be compared to us saying the man owed a billion dollars.

Matt. 18:25 But since he was not able to pay him back, his lord ordered that he, and his wife, and his children, and everything that he had, be sold to pay back the debt.

But since he was not able to pay him back, his lord ordered that he, and his wife, and his children, and everything that he had, be sold to pay back the debt. Whatever it takes.

Matt. 18:26 And the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.”

Note on a variant reading: After *saying* some manuscripts have *lord*.

And the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.” He asks for time to pay back the debt.

Matt. 18:27 And the lord of that slave was moved with compassion and canceled his debt, and released him.

And the lord of that slave was moved with compassion and canceled his debt, and released him. A very generous act.

Matt. 18:28 But that same slave, as he went out, found one of his fellow slaves who owed him one hundred denari; and after seizing that slave he began choking him, saying, ‘Pay back to me that which you owe.’

But that same slave, as he went out, found one of his fellow slaves who owed him one hundred denari; and after seizing that slave he began choking him, saying, ‘Pay back to me that which you owe.’ This slave owed him next to nothing. The second debt has been calculated to be one six hundred thousandth of the first debt.

Matt. 18:29 Then his fellow slave fell down to his knees and pleaded with him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you back.”

Note on a variant reading: After *fell down* some manuscripts read *at his feet*.

Then his fellow slave fell down to his knees and pleaded with him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you back.” Sound familiar? Almost word for word of what he said to his master.

Matt. 18:30 But he was not willing; instead, he went away and threw him into the prison, until he paid back that which he owed.

But he was not willing; instead, he went away and threw him into the prison, until he paid back that which he owed. No mercy.

Matt. 18:31 So when his fellow slaves saw what had occurred, they were exceedingly sad, and they went out and told to their lord everything that had happened.

So when his fellow slaves saw what had occurred, they were exceedingly sad, and they went out and told to their lord everything that had happened. The ruler will now hear about it.

Matt. 18:32 Then his lord summoned him and said to him, “Evil slave! I forgave all that you owed, because you pleaded with me.

Then his lord summoned him and said to him, “Evil slave!

I forgave all that you owed, He reminds him of his generosity.

because you pleaded with me. The reason for his mercy is due to the pleading of that slave.

Matt. 18:33 You should you have had mercy on your fellow slave, should you not, just as I also had mercy on you?

You should you have had mercy on your fellow slave, should you not, just as I also had mercy on you? The only natural thing to do. The Greek demands a yes answer to the question.

Matt. 18:34 And his lord was moved with anger, and delivered him over to the tormentors, until he paid back everything that he owed.

And his lord was moved with anger, and delivered him over to the tormentors, until he paid back everything that he owed. The man will learn a tough lesson.

Matt. 18:35 So also my heavenly Father will do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.

Note on a variant reading After *your heart* some manuscripts have *their trespasses*.

So also my heavenly Father will do to you, Jesus now picks up with last scene of the parable but His interpretation is based on the entire parable.

if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart. Forgiveness must come from the heart. Those who do not forgive should not expect themselves to be forgiven (see Ephesians 4:32). Jesus made the same point in the Lord's prayer (6:12,14-15). Christians should be characterized by their willingness to forgive one another.

Summary to Chapter 18

As Jesus ministry continues, so does His instruction to His followers. True greatness lies in humbling oneself. Those who wish to be great must be the servant of all.

Jesus has some strong warning about those who would "stumble" believers. The judgment upon them is great.

The Lord then gives the pattern of confronting an erring believer. We are to approach our fellow believer in a spirit of humility when we confront them. The goal is not punishment but rather restoration.

He then speaks about unlimited forgiveness illustrating it with the parable of the two debtors.

**Matthew
Chapter 19**

Jesus will now leave the Galilee on His way to Jerusalem and His destiny. Along the way He teaches about divorce, and the welcomes children to His kingdom. Jesus then meets a rich young ruler who wants to have eternal life. This brings Jesus into teaching about riches and the kingdom. Finally, He answers Peter's question about what they will receive for following Him.

The Road To Jerusalem (19:1-2)

Jesus now leaves the Galilee and is on His way to Jerusalem to fulfill the reason why He came to earth.

Matt. 19:1 And it came about when Jesus finished these things, he withdrew from the Galilee and came into the region of Judea, beyond the Jordan.

And it came about when Jesus finished these things, Jesus has finished the things leading up to His trip to Jerusalem.

he withdrew from the Galilee and came into the region of Judea, beyond the Jordan. He is now moving southward, his journey will eventually take Him to Jerusalem.

Matt. 19:2 And great multitudes followed after him, and he healed them there.

And great multitudes followed after him, The multitudes are still with Him.

and he healed them there. Jesus is still healing.

The Pharisees And Divorce (19:3-12)

Jesus now takes on the difficult issue of divorce.

Matt. 19:3 And some Pharisees came to him, testing him, and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?"

And some Pharisees came to him, testing him, Note that they were not interested in the answer to their question.

and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?"
The question was not about divorce in our modern sense of the term. The debate was over the question whether a Jewish man could unilaterally divorce his wife for any issue about which the wife could not appeal. Roman law permitted either party to divorce the other while Jewish law permitted the husband to divorce the wife no matter what the wife wanted.

Matt. 19:4 And he answered and said, “Have you not read, that He who created them at the beginning, made them male and female,

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *create* some manuscripts read *made*.

And he answered and said, “Have you not read, Jesus again appeals to the knowledge of those He is speaking to.

that he who created them at the beginning, made them male and female, Please notice that Jesus believed in the Genesis account of creation.

Matt. 19:5 and he said, ‘For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will be one flesh?’

and he said, ‘For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will be one flesh?’ The union God created in the beginning was exclusive and unbreakable.

Matt. 19:6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, that which God has joined together, let not man separate.”

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, that which God has joined together, let not man separate.” This was God’s original intention. Marriage is forever.

Matt. 19:7 They said to him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, to divorce her?”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *her* after *divorce*.

They said to him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, to divorce her?” If this were God’s original intention, then why the allowance for divorce? They assumed the Law of Moses explicitly commanded or even approved divorce. However it did neither.

Matt. 19:8 He said to them, “Because of the hardness of your heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been this way.

He said to them, “Because of the hardness of your heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been this way. It was neither commanded nor approved but rather tolerated because of the hard hearts of the people. The statements of Moses were not a divine sanction for divorce.

Matt. 19:9 But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman, he is committing adultery.”

Note on a variant readings: Instead of *except for sexual immorality* some manuscripts read *except on the ground of sexual immorality*.

After *he is committing adultery* some manuscripts read *And he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery*

There are four issues in this verse that make interpretation difficult:

What is the exact wording of the text?

What is the meaning of the Greek term *porneia* translated sexual immorality.

What the word *except* means and

Why it is in Matthew alone without being contained in Mark and Luke

How do we understand the disciples reaction to what Jesus said.

But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, The word translated immorality has the idea of any sexual sin..

and marries another woman, Not only do they commit sexual sin, they marry someone else

he is committing adultery.” Here we have the tension between the absolute ideal of no divorce and the exception that Jesus allows. There is the recognition that we live in a fallen world. Jesus now will speak with His authority.

Matt. 19:10 His disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man and his wife, it is better not to marry.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the word *His* before *disciples*.

His disciples said to him, “If such is the case with a man and his wife, it is better not to marry.” With the commitment expected is it better to stay single?

Matt. 19:11 And he said to them, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the word *this* before *teaching*.

And he said to them, “Not everyone Jesus is not recommending celibacy over marriage, especially after what He has just said about marriage. Nowhere else does He speak of celibacy as God’s ideal.

can accept this word, This can be taken to mean either:

(1) The disciples comment in verse 10 or

(2) Jesus teaching about marriage in verses 3-9.

The first interpretation would have Jesus saying that the disciples proposal of celibacy is a good one, but that not all are able to remain celibate; in that case celibacy becomes a higher ideal for those who can attain it. The second interpretation sets aside the disciples comment about celibacy with the statement that the ideal of marriage is a demanding one, to which not everyone is called, but it is a responsibility that should not be avoided by those whom God calls to it.

but only those to whom it has been given.” Those who can cope with it.

Matt. 19:12 For certain eunuchs were born that way; and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men; and there are certain ones who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who is able to accept this, let him accept it.

For certain eunuchs were born that way; and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men; and there are certain ones who have made themselves eunuchs “Made themselves eunuchs” is not to be taken literally (see NIV which translates the phrase “renounced marriage”).

for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who is able to accept this, let him accept it. If the second interpretation is correct, then this statement is a parenthesis for those whom the gift of marriage is not given—those whom God has called to remain single. Celibacy was unusual in Jewish society and it is not unlikely that Jesus Himself was abused by the people because He was not married. There are many reasons, as He points out, that someone may remain unmarried. This could be physical incapacity (either natural or man-inflicted) or some can voluntary be celibate for the kingdom of God.

Celibacy is not considered a holier state than marriage (1 Timothy 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:4) nor it is a condition for top level leadership (Matthew 8:14; 1 Corinthians 9:5). It is a special calling for greater usefulness for those who have this calling.

The Disciples And The Children (19:13-15)

Jesus teaches the disciples about humility.

Matt. 19:13 And then little children were brought to him so that he might lay his hands upon them and pray; but his disciples rebuked them.

And then little children were brought to him so that he might lay his hands upon them and pray; It was a Jewish custom to bring a child to

the elders on the Day of Atonement “to bless and pray for him” (*Mishnah Sopherim* 18:5). This may be the background for this incident.

but his disciples rebuked them. The disciples’ objection may be to the popular assumption that Jesus was to be identified merely as a regular elder—He was much more than that. Furthermore they may have thought that He has more important concerns than to be bothered by children. The object of the disciples rebuke is most likely the children, not the ones who brought them.

Matt. 19:14 And Jesus said, “Leave the children alone, and do not hinder them to come to me; for the kingdom of the heaven belongs to such as these.”

And Jesus said, “Leave the children alone, and do not hinder them to come to me; Jesus reverses the conventional values that had a low estimate of a child’s importance in society (even His own followers had this view).

for the kingdom of the heaven belongs to such as these.” while Jesus welcomes the children, *such* points beyond children and refers to anyone one who comes to Jesus with a childlike status. The sick, the outcast, the Gentiles, the women, the children, were all welcomed in the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 19:15 And after laying his hands upon them, he went away from there.

And after laying his hands upon them, he went away from there. Normally, in the gospels, the laying on of hands is associated with healing but here it is more the act of identification and acceptance.

The Rich Young Ruler And Eternal Life (19:16-22)

Jesus is approached by a rich man who wants to be assured of eternal life.

Matt. 19:16 And behold, one of them came to him and said, “Teacher, what good thing must I do that I might have eternal life?”

Note on a variant reading: Before the word *Teacher* some manuscripts have the word *good*.

And behold, one of them came to him and said, Only Matthew tells us that he was young (vss 20,22). Luke adds, as his wealth suggest, that he was a leading member of society (literally “ruler”). His question seems to be sincere.

“Teacher, what good thing must I do that I might have eternal life?” What good thing reflects a common assumption that we must *do* something rather than *be* something. He wants to know what good deed can he do so that he will inherit eternal life—possible some great act of charity.

Matt. 19:17 And he said to him, “Why are you asking me about what is good? There is only one who is good. But if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *Why are you asking Me about what is the good?* some manuscripts read *Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone* (see Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19).

And he said to him, “Why are you asking me about what is good? There is only one who is good. Jesus explores the implications of the word good. This man assumed goodness was in his deeds, he had made it a human quality. However goodness is only relative to the one who is good—that is God. Therefore goodness is not to be found with our own resources and what we can give but rather in accepting God’s standards and reflecting His character.

But if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” The commandments are not an automatic guarantee to life, they rather point the way and of course, the need for a Savior.

Matt. 19:18 And he said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You will not murder; you will not commit adultery; you will not steal; you will not bear false witness;

And he said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You will not murder; you will not commit adultery; you will not steal; you will not bear false witness; These commandments are concerned primarily about how we treat other people.

Matt. 19:19 honor your father and your mother, and you will love your neighbor as yourself.”

honor your father and your mother, Something He has already emphasized.

and you will love your neighbor as yourself.” The commandments are appropriately summed up by Leviticus 19:18.

Matt. 19:20 The young man said to him, “All these things I have kept, what am I still lacking?”

Note on a variant reading: After *I have kept* some manuscripts have *from my youth* (see Mark 10:20; Luke 18:21).

The young man said to him, “All these things I have kept, what am I still lacking?” He is aware that he is good, yet he knows he is not good enough.

Matt. 19:21 Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go sell all your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come follow me.”

Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go sell all your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come follow me.” Two elements are stated, selling and giving and then following Jesus. This is not teaching salvation by works, Jesus was on His way to the cross.

Matt. 19:22 And when the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

And when the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions. The man was a slave to his possessions.

The Difficulty Of Riches (19:23-30)

Jesus shows that trusting in riches can keep one out of the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 19:23 And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Poverty is not an essential condition of discipleship. There were followers of Jesus who were wealthy. Jesus did not command all of His followers to sell all their possessions. Yet riches are a stumbling block for many.

Matt. 19:24 Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, rather than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *camel* some manuscripts read *a rope*, or *ship's cable*. The word for *camel* and *rope* or *ships cable* are spelled and pronounced nearly identical.

Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, rather than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Wealth can be a handicap. Jesus illustrates this with a ludicrous parallel. A camel was the largest common animal (cf. 23:23) trying to squeeze through the smallest imaginable hole. Various attempts to make it less ludicrous (e.g. the later reading the Greek text *kamilos* which means “cable,” or the imaginary gate called the “The Needle’s Eye) fail to appreciate Jesus’ sense of humor but also miss the point that it is humanly impossible for someone to enter the kingdom of God.

Matt. 19:25 And when his disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, “Who then can be saved?”

And when his disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, “Who then can be saved?” By current Jewish standards the disciples were rightly amazed, for the rich were those considered as ones whom God has blessed.

Matt. 19:26 Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Jesus makes it clear that salvation is a supernatural work. Titus 3:5, Ephesians 2:8,9.

Matt. 19:27 And Peter answered and said to him, “Behold, we have left all things and followed after you. What will there be for us?”

And Peter answered and said to him, “Behold, we have left all things and followed after you. What will there be for us?” Peter wants to know “what’s in it for him and the rest of the disciples”

Matt. 19:28 And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you that in the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed after me will sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you that in the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed after me will sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Their reward is more than they can imagine.

Matt. 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake, will receive one hundred times as much, and inherit eternal life.

Note on a variant readings: After *father or mother* some manuscripts have the word *wife*. Some manuscripts read *parents* instead of *father or mother*.

Instead of *one hundred times* some manuscripts read *many times* while others read *seven times*.

And whosoever leaves houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother children or fields on account of my name, he will receive one hundred times more and life everlasting. God always gives more to us than we do to Him.

Matt. 19:30 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.

For many of the first will be last, and the last ones will be first. The different value system of the Christians compared with the world.

Summary to Chapter 19

Jesus now turns toward Jerusalem to meet His fate. As He is proceeding He speaks to the religious leaders about divorce. He allows only one cause for divorce, marital unfaithfulness. Jesus then speaks about eunuchs and their place in the kingdom of God.

The Gospel According To Matthew

Children become His next subject. They are to be welcomed into the kingdom of heaven.

Then we have the meeting of Jesus and the rich young ruler. This man wants to have assurance of eternal life but he is now willing to do what it takes. This causes Jesus to speak about the problem of riches and the kingdom of God.

Finally, He answers Peter's question regarding their reward for following Him, untold riches will be theirs as well as authority to judge the tribes of Israel.

**Matthew
Chapter 20**

Matthew continues to record Jesus speaking in parables.

The Parable Of The Workers In The Vineyard (20:1-16)

We now see how the last person can become first (19:30)—by pure grace. The parable begins with a typical scene but ends with elements that are anything but typical. These facts surprise the reader and make a powerful point. If God's generosity would be compared to a man, such a man would be different than anyone they had ever encountered.

Matt. 20:1 The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner, The example will now be a man who owns some land.

who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. The normal working day was ten hours long, not counting breaks. The landowner would have found his first men at 6 a.m.

Matt. 20:2 And after agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.

And after agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. This was the normal wage for a foot soldier or day laborer (Tobit 5:14; Tacitus *Annales*, 1,17; Pliny 33:3).

Matt. 20:3 And he went out around the third hour, and saw others standing idly in the marketplace;

And he went out around the third hour, and saw others standing idly in the marketplace; There were twelve hours from dawn to sundown. The third hour would be about 9:00 a.m.

Matt. 20:4 and he said to them, "You yourselves also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right, I will give to you."

and he said to them, "You yourselves also go into the vineyard, Why the landowner kept returning to hire more men is not spelled out. Suggestions have been: lack of foresight, not finding enough workers earlier, or the poor work of the first laborers. However, since we do not know the reason why he kept hiring men, this fact cannot be the key to understanding the parable.

and whatever is right, I will give to you." The men that came out the third hour trusted in the landlord's integrity.

Matt. 20:5 And they went away. He went out again around the sixth and ninth hour and did the same thing.

And they went away. He went out again around the sixth and ninth hour and did the same thing. He repeats the process.

Matt. 20:6 About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around; and said to them, “Why have you been standing here idle all day?”

About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around; and said to them, “Why have you been standing here idle all day?” These people have been waiting all day.

Matt. 20:7 They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You yourselves also go into the vineyard.’

They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ They were standing around because no one had hired them.

He said to them, ‘You yourselves also go into the vineyard.’ He sends them out also.

Matt. 20:8 And when it had become evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give to each of them their wages, beginning with the last until the first.’

And when it had become evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give to each of them their wages, beginning with the last until the first.’ The manager was told to pay each laborer the standard day’s wage. Laborers were customarily paid at the end of the day (Leviticus 19:13).

Matt. 20:9 And when those hired around the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius.

And when those hired around the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. The normal pay for a day.

Matt. 20:10 And when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received one denarius.

And when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more; More than they bargained for.

but each of them also received one denarius. The agreed upon wage.

Matt. 20:11 And when they received it, they began grumbling against the landowner.

And when they received it, they began grumbling against the landowner. They grumble because he had been generous to others, but only fair to them.

Matt. 20:12 saying, ‘These last ones worked only one hour and you made them equal with us, the ones who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’

saying, ‘These last ones worked only one hour and you made them equal with us, the ones who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ They bore the heat of the day which could drive workers from the field, and though fairly paid, they feel unfairly treated because the others that worked less received the same amount. There is nothing in this parable that implies the Jews have borne the burden of the law and now Gentile outcasts are made equal to them.

Matt. 20:13 And he answered and said to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. You agreed with me for one denarius did you not?’

And he answered and said to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. You agreed with me for one denarius did you not? He is not being unfair to him.

Matt. 20:14 Take what is yours and go. For I choose to give to the last one the same as to you.

Take what is yours and go. For I choose to give to the last one the same as to you. It’s his business what he does with his money.

Matt. 20:15 I am allowed, am I not, for me to do what I choose with what is mine? Or is your eye evil because I am good?

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the word *or*

I am allowed, am I not, for me to do what I choose with what is mine? Or is your eye evil because I am good? He asks, “Why are you envious about my goodness?” This shows that God’s gifts are not based upon our merit, but rather upon His grace and goodness. In the world, the one who does the most work receives the most pay. However, in the kingdom of God the principles of merit are set aside so that grace can prevail.

Matt. 20:16 So, the last will be first, and the first last.

Note on a variant reading: After *and the first last* some manuscripts read the following words *many are invited, but few are chosen* (see 22:14)

So, the last will be first, and the first last. Grace makes some who are last first.

A Third Prediction Of Jesus’ Death And Resurrection (20:17-19)

Jesus takes the disciples aside and predicts His death and resurrection for a third time.

Matt. 20:17 And while Jesus was going up unto Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and said to them on the way,

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the word *disciples* after twelve.

And while Jesus was going up unto Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and said to them on the way, Again this message is only for the twelve, not for the multitudes.

Matt. 20:18 “Behold, we are going up into Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death.

“Behold, we are going up into Jerusalem; Jerusalem was the focal point of Jewish worship.

and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death. This is the third major prediction of Jesus’ death.

Matt. 20:19 And they will deliver him over to the Gentiles to be treated shamefully, flogged, and crucified, and on the third day he will be raised.

And they will deliver him over to the Gentiles to be treated shamefully, flogged, and crucified, and on the third day he will be raised. Mention of the resurrection is brief and apparently not understood (cf. Luke 18:34). They probably think that His language is hyperbolic.

TWO OF JESUS’ DISCIPLES SEEK STATUS (20:20-23)

The mother of James and John request special status for their sons.

Matt. 20:20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him, with her sons, kneeling before him, and making a request of him.

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him, with her sons, kneeling before him, and making a request of him. That the mother would approach Jesus is likely because she was likely His aunt on His mother’s side.

Matt. 20:21 And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one on the right hand, and one on the left, in your kingdom.”

And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one on the right hand, and one on the left, in your kingdom.” Again the question of rank returns. Right hand and left hand suggests proximity to the King’s person and so a share in His prestige and power.

Matt. 20:22 Jesus answered and said, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? And they said to him, “We are able.”

Note on a variant reading: After *about to drink* some manuscripts have the phrase *or to be baptized with the baptism I am to be baptized with* (see Mark 10:38,39).

Jesus answered and said, “You do not know what you are asking. It is often ignorance that seeks after leadership, power and glory: the brothers do not know what they are asking.

Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? The cup refers to His suffering.

And they said to him, we are able. They have no idea about what is going to happen to Jesus.

Matt. 20:23 He said to them, “You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is to the ones prepared by my Father.”

Note on a variant readings: Some manuscripts have *and the baptism which I am to be baptized with* after *My cup you will indeed drink*.

Some manuscripts do not have the word *this* before *is not mine to give*.

He said to them, “You will indeed drink my cup, He first answers on their own terms. In a sense they will drink from His cup of suffering (James was the first apostolic martyr (Acts 12:2) and John would suffer exile (Revelation 1:9).

but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is to the ones prepared by my Father.” It is not Jesus’ role to determine who sits where. His authority is derived from the Father (11:27; 24:36; 28:18; John 14:28) and Jesus cannot assign these positions at a mother’s request.

Jesus Speaks About Servanthood (20:24-28)

After this episode and the jealous response of the other disciples, Jesus speaks about true servanthood.

Matt. 20:24 When the ten heard this, became indignant with the two brothers.

When the ten heard this, became indignant with the two brothers. The indignation probably sprang from jealousy. They were afraid they might lose out.

Matt. 20:25 But Jesus called them to himself, and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

But Jesus called them to himself, and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Jesus contrasts the greatness of the heirs of the kingdom and the greatness among the nations.

Matt. 20:26 It will not be so with you; but whoever wishes to be great among you, let him become your servant,

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *it will not* be some manuscripts read *it is not*.

It will not be so with you; but whoever wishes to be great among you, let him become your servant, Let us never forget these truths.

Matt. 20:27 and whoever wishes to be first among you, will be your slave.

and whoever wishes to be first among you, will be your slave. A revolutionary way of looking at greatness.

Matt. 20:28 Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Note on a variant reading: At the end of this verse several manuscripts read the following: “But seek to increase from that which is small, and from the greater to become less. When you enter into a house and are invited to dine, do not recline in the prominent places, lest perchance one more honorable than you come in, and the host come and say to you, “Go, farther down”; and you will be put to shame. But if you recline in the lower place and one inferior to you comes in, the host will say to you, “Go farther up”” and this will be advantageous to you.”

Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, Jesus came to this earth to be a servant, not to be served by the people. His coming, however, was much more than that.

and to give his life a ransom for many. This is the key verse in Matthew for it clearly states the purpose of Jesus’ coming. See 1 Peter 1:18.

The Healing Of The Two Blind Men (20:29-31)

Jesus heals two blind men while on the way to Jerusalem There are some differences between Matthew’s account and Mark’s that have caused some to see a contradiction. Mark mentions only one blind man.

Matt. 20:29 And as they went out from Jericho, a great crowd followed him.

And as they went out from Jericho, a great crowd followed him. Jericho was one day's journey from Jerusalem and the home town of His ancestor Rahab.

Matt. 20:30 And behold two blind men were sitting by the road, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they began to cry out saying, "Have mercy upon us, Lord, Son of David."

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the word *Lord*.

And behold two blind men were sitting by the road, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they began to cry out saying, "Have mercy upon us, Lord, Son of David." Though physically blind, they have spiritually sight, they recognize that Jesus is the Son of David.

Matt. 20:31 But the crowd rebuked them that they should remain silent; but they shouted out all the more saying, "Have mercy upon us, Lord, Son of David,"

But the crowd rebuked them that they should remain silent; but they shouted out all the more saying, "Have mercy upon us, Lord, Son of David," They would not be shut up.

Matt. 20:32 And Jesus stood still and called them, saying, "What do you want me to do for you?"

And Jesus stood still and called them, saying, "What do you want me to do for you?" He wants a specific request from them.

Matt. 20:33 And they said to him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened."

And they said to him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." They wish to see.

Matt. 20:34 And Jesus, being moved with compassion, touched their eyes. Immediately they regained their sight and began to follow him.

And Jesus, being moved with compassion, Jesus is again moved with compassion and heals them.

touched their eyes. This is another of the cases where Jesus touched the sick person and made them well.

Immediately they regained their sight and began to follow him. There is no command to keep silent about their healing, for the events that are about to occur in Jerusalem cannot be stopped. They followed Jesus to Jerusalem and the expected Passover celebration, they would also experience something unexpected—the cross.

Summary to Chapter 20

The Gospel According To Matthew

Jesus continues to address the disciples in parables. The parable of the workers in the vineyard shows that God's rewards are based upon true grace, not our human effort. Those who come in last will receive the same as those who came in first.

The sons of Zebedee, James and John want a special place in Jesus' kingdom but Jesus tells them that this is for His Father to give, not Him.

When the other disciples get angry at the brothers, Jesus then launches into a discussion of true greatness. The chapter concludes with another account of Jesus healing two blind men.

**Matthew
Chapter 21**

Jesus Enters Jerusalem (21:1-11)

Jesus comes to Jerusalem—the final destination of His public ministry. His entry into Jerusalem will show that He is a king of a different order than most of the people expected.

Matt. 21:1 And when they had approached Jerusalem and came to Bethpage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples

And when they had approached Jerusalem The Roman military road from Jericho to Jerusalem was about seventeen miles long and climbed three over thousand feet.

and came to Bethpage, The road passed through Bethany(v. 17) and nearby Bethpage (house of figs), which lay on the southeast slope of the Mount of Olives. These cities are named to inform the reader that Jesus is near to the city of Jerusalem.

at the Mount of Olives, This large hill, just to the east of Jerusalem, may have been mentioned here because of the Messianic associations with it (Zechariah 14:4).

then Jesus sent two disciples. Jesus sends two unnamed disciples ahead.

Matt. 21:2 saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me.

saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, He is purposefully making preparations to enter Jerusalem in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9.

and immediately you will find a donkey tied there, Jesus, a Lord or all, knows what they will discover.

and a colt with her. Colts that had not been ridden sometimes accompanied their mothers.

Untie them and bring them to me. Jesus now exercises a prerogative of royalty. Kings have the right of “impressing” or commandeering an animal. Jesus, as the Lord, has the right to whatever His subjects own—whether they be His disciples or not.

Jesus Himself arranges for the ride on the colt. This was a deliberate act of revealing Himself to those who had eyes to see and ears to hear. No longer will He be secret concerning His identity.

Matt. 21:3 And if anyone says anything to you, you say, ‘Their Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”

And if anyone says anything to you, In case someone questions what they are doing.

you say, This is how you respond.

‘Their Lord The term *lord* might mean the owner of the animals. The Greek word *kurios* is used for the divine name (Yahweh) as well as the simple title “master,” or “lord.” In this context, it seems the most natural way of taking it is Jesus referring to Himself.

has need of them,’ The true king has the right to anything that belongs to the members of His kingdom.

and immediately he will send them.” Jesus correctly predicts the outcome. Some have argued that this had been prearranged by Jesus with the owner of the animals apart from the knowledge of His disciples. There is, however, nothing in the context to suggest this. Jesus, as the Lord, is able to foreknow the future.

Matt. 21:4 This all took place to fulfill that which was spoken through the prophet, saying,

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *Isaiah the prophet* instead of *the prophet*.

This all took place to fulfill This might be the words of Jesus rather than Matthew.

that which was spoken through the prophet, saying, The first part is from Isaiah 62:11 and the rest from Zechariah 9:9.

Matt. 21:5 “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, gentle and mounted upon a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

“Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king The fulfillment shows that Jesus is indeed a king.

is coming to you, gentle and mounted upon a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” He is a meek king not a warrior-like king (see 11:29; 12:18-21). Officials used donkeys for civil not military processions (e.g. 1 Kings 1:33). Therefore this was not a triumphal entry in the sense of a Roman triumph. It is the meek and peaceful king coming to His subjects. This is Jesus’ definition of what sort of King He was.

Matt. 21:6 And the disciples went away and did just as Jesus directed them,

And the disciples went away and did just as Jesus directed them, The peaceful entry is now set in motion.

Matt. 21:7 And they brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and He sat upon them.

And they brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and He sat upon them. Jesus sat upon the garments, not both of the animals!

Matt. 21:8 And the great crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others were cutting down branches from the trees and spreading them in the road.

And the great crowd spread their cloaks on the road, They are making the way for the king.

and others were cutting down branches from the trees The cutting down of branches was appropriate for this setting. John (12:13) mentions that they cut down palm branches. Palm branches were normally used for the feast of Tabernacles or triumphal entries. Consequently the fact that Jesus was riding on a donkey showed that He was rejecting the revolutionary aspirations of some of the members of the crowd.

and spreading them in the road. They were acknowledging Jesus' kingship. In the midst of the noise of the crowd, Jesus rides the unbroken animal. As Matthew has already emphasized, Jesus is the Lord over nature (8: 23-27).

Matt. 21:9 And the crowd that was going ahead of him, and the ones following after were crying out saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who is come in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest!"

And the crowd that was going ahead of him, The crowds were leading the procession.

and the ones following after were crying out saying, "Hosanna This has the idea of save now.

to the Son of David! Unfortunately they did not grasp the full meaning of this term.

Blessed is he who is come in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest!" They acknowledge that He is the Messiah and He accepts their worship. However He will not entrust Himself to them (see John 2:23-25). A few days later, many from this same crowd will shout "crucify Him."

Matt. 21:10 And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was shaken, saying, "Who is this?"

And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was shaken, The same phrase is used of Jerusalem when the wise men came at the birth of Jesus (2:3).

saying, “Who is this?” They want to know the identity of this person the crowds are acknowledging. Jerusalem did not know its king.

Matt. 21:11 And the crowd was saying, “This is the prophet—Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.

And the crowd was saying, “This is the prophet—Not a complete description of Jesus.

Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee. It was possibly the Galilean crowd that explained to the others who Jesus was.

The Cleansing Of The Temple (21:12-17)

Jesus comes into Jerusalem and pronounces condemnation on the Temple practices. Furthermore, He overturns the tables and drives out the moneychangers in an act of judgment.

Matt. 21:12 Then Jesus entered into the temple and he drove out all the ones buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of the ones selling the doves.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *temple of God* instead of *temple*.

Then Jesus entered into the temple and he drove out all the ones buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of the ones selling the doves. Jesus records His distaste for what is occurring in the house of worship. Like Jeremiah smashing the pot (Jeremiah 19) Jesus demonstration was a prophetic act warning of the temple’s immediate destruction (24:1,2).

Matt. 21:13 And he said to them, “It is written, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you yourselves are making it a robber’s den.”

And he said to them, “It is written, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’

but you yourselves are making it a robber’s den.” It has become a place of robbers.

There has been much discussion regarding why Jesus cleansed the temple.

Keener argues that it was not because of extortion on the part of the money changers.

The money changers probably did not see themselves as taking advantage of the pilgrims. Even in Galilee the varieties of local currency required money changers to convert coinage for use in the temple (and local economy); changing coins was necessary, not an option . . . Further the temple money changers seem to have made little if any profit (m. Seqalim

1.6-7), though Jerusalem profited from the resultant trade. We have no evidence that the priestly aristocracy made a direct profit (Keener, p. 314).

Blomberg seems to feel there was some evidence of price-gouging.

The Mishnaic document M. Ker. 1:7 gives evidence, at least from a later date, that extraordinary prices for doves exacerbated the plight of the poor (Blomberg, p. 314).

Matt. 21:14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. This is the proper ministry to occur in the house of God. Jesus, by healing the blind and the lame, rejected their laws which kept the ritually impure from being in the temple. This is the last mention of His healing ministry.

Matt. 21:15 But when the chief priests and scribes saw the marvelous works which he had done, and the children crying out in the temple, and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became indignant,

But when the chief priests and scribes saw the marvelous works which he had done, After Jesus condemns the commercial system of the temple, He uses the same facility to perform miraculous works.

and the children crying out in the temple, The children understood where the religious rulers did not (see 19:13-15).

and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became indignant. They cannot accept what the crowd is saying.

Matt. 21:16 and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and infants you have ordained praise?’ ”

and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” Their question implies that Jesus should have rebuked the children for their praise of Him.

And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, Again, they are ignorant of the true meaning of the Scriptures.

‘Out of the mouth of babes and infants you have ordained praise?’ ” Shows that the humble perceive spiritual truth.

Matt. 21:17 And he left them and went outside of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

And he left them The word translated “left” can also be translated “abandoned.”

And went outside of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there. Probably at the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha.

The Cursing of the Fig Tree (21:18-19)

Jesus performs only the second destructive miracle of His ministry—the cursing of the fig tree. This miracle is representative of Christ’s coming and failure to find fruit among the people who should have welcomed Him with open arms—particularly so, in light of the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27. This acted out parable of the cursing of the fig tree has a greater meaning than just the cursing of the Jews for their unbelief. It curses all hypocrites who make a show of faith because there is no fruit (compare the parable of the sower).

Matthew records the story for the spiritual lesson it teaches. It is the only one of two recorded miracles in the ministry of Jesus that caused some destruction. It has been a source of embarrassment to many commentators and believers, because it supposedly is out of character for Jesus. But this is not the case. The same Jesus exorcised demons so that two thousand pigs drowned (8:28-34), also drove out the money changers with a whip. In addition, He said not a few things about the torments of hell. It should be noted, however that these two punitive miracles—the swine and the fig tree—are not directed against men. This, of itself, should teach us something of Jesus’ compassion. He who is to save the people from their sin and its consequences resorts to prophetic actions not directed against His own people, in order to warn them of the power of the devil (the destruction of the pigs) and of God’s hatred with all hypocrisy (the cursing of the fig tree).

Matt. 21:18 And early in the morning, while he was going back to the city, he became hungry.

And early in the morning, while he was going back to the city, Jesus is now returning to Jerusalem.

he became hungry. Jesus approached the fig tree in hope of satisfying His hunger.

Matt. 21:19 And seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except only the leaves. Then He said to it, “No longer may there ever be fruit from you! And suddenly the fig tree withered.

And seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except only the leaves. However, it was not the season for the figs. Fig leaves appear about the same time as the fruit or a little after. The green figs are edible, though they are sufficiently disagreeable as not to be usually eaten until June. The leaves normally point to the prospect of fruit, even if not fully ripe. Sometimes, however, the green figs fall off and leave nothing but leaves

Then He said to it, “No longer may there ever be fruit from you! This fig tree would never bear fruit again.

And suddenly the fig tree withered. Why would Jesus curse a fig tree for not bearing fruit when it was not bearing fruit? The fact that it was not the season for the figs explains why Jesus went to this particular tree, which stood out because it was in leaf. It advertises that it was bearing fruit when it was not. Jesus uses this to teach a memorable lesson and cursed the tree. It was not because it was not bearing fruit, whether in season or not, but because it made a show of life that promised fruit yet was actually bearing none.

Jesus Speaks About Faith (21:20-22)

After the fig tree withers Jesus teaches His disciples on the importance of faith.

Matt. 21:20 And when the disciples saw this, they marveled, saying, “How did this fig tree wither so quickly?”

And when the disciples saw this, they marveled, Again we note the response to a miracle of Jesus—it would be the same for you and I.

saying, “How did this fig tree wither so quickly?” Matthew leaves indistinct the time when the disciples saw the withered tree (Mark tells us it was the next day (11:12-14, 20-26). Matthew also has condensed other accounts (9:18-25). Mark places the accounts between Jesus cleansing of the temple. His rage against the fig tree is an acted out parable of the meaning of that cleansing. Instead of finding fruit in Israel, the Messiah finds the dry leaves of hypocrisy and formalism and He judges it.

Matt. 21:21 Jesus answered and said to them, “Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you can not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, “Be taken up and be thrown into the sea, and it will happen.”

Jesus answered and said to them, “Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, The transition between the withering of the fig tree and the statement about faith is somewhat difficult to understand.

you can not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, “Be taken up and be thrown into the sea, and it will happen.” Removing mountains is figurative for doing impossible.

Matt. 21:22 And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.

And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive. The lesson here is in the power of prayer. This promise has to be read in accordance with the other things Scripture has to say about prayer. We cannot take this verse out of its context and assume that we can get whatever we ask God to give us.

The Authority Of Jesus Questioned (21:23-27)

After the cleansing of the temple the religious leaders want to know by what authority Jesus is doing these things.

Matt. 21:23 And when he had come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him while he was teaching, saying, “By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave to you this authority?”

And when he had come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him while he was teaching, saying, “By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave to you this authority?” They wanted to know who gave Him the right to make these claims for Himself.

Matt. 21:24 And Jesus answered and said to them, “I, too, will ask you one question, which, if you tell me, I, too, will tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

And Jesus answered and said to them, “I, too, will ask you one question, which, if you tell me, I, too, will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. Answering a question with a counter question was common in Jewish debate.

Matt. 21:25 The baptism of John: where was it from? From heaven or from men? And they began to discuss among themselves saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven;’ he will say to us, ‘Why, then, did you not believe him?’

The baptism of John: where was it from? From heaven or from men? Heaven means from God.

And they began to discuss among themselves saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven;’ he will say to us, ‘Why, then, did you not believe him?’ If John derived his authority from Heaven then so did Jesus. The messenger acts on the full authority of the one who sent him.

Matt. 21:26 But if we say, ‘From men,’ we are afraid of the crowd; for all regarded John as a prophet.”

But if we say, ‘From men,’ we are afraid of the crowd; for all regarded John as a prophet.” They cannot win no matter how they answer the question.

Matt. 21:27 And they answered Jesus and said, “We do not know.” Then he said to them, “Neither shall I say to you by what authority I am doing these things.”

And they answered Jesus and said, “We do not know.” Then he said to them, “Neither shall I say to you by what authority I am doing these things.” Jesus will not answer this insincere question.

The Parable Of The Two Sons (21:28-32)

Jesus now gives the parable of the two sons.

Matt. 21:28 “What do you think? A man had two sons and he went to the first one and said, ‘Son, go out and work today in the vineyard,’

What do you think? A man had two sons and he went to the first one and said, ‘Son, go out and work today in the vineyard,’ The first son was asked to work in the vineyard.

Matt. 21:29 And he answered and said, “I will not.” But later, after changing his mind, he went off.

Note on variant readings: Verses 29-31 have several variant readings. The issues include: Was the son who initially said no but then changed his mind the first or the second son mentioned? (vs 29) Which of the two sons did the Jews assert had done the will of the father (verse 31), and what word did they use in reply to Jesus (verse 32)? The text of these verses is found in three principal forms.

1. Some manuscripts have the first son saying no but afterwards he repents. The second son says yes but does nothing. Which one did the will of the father? The answer is the first one.

2. Other manuscripts have the first son saying no but afterward he repents. The second son says yes but does nothing. Which one did the will of the father? The answer is the second.

3. The third group of manuscripts have the first son saying yes but doing nothing while the second says no but afterward repents. According to these manuscripts the last one did the will of the father (some editions of the Greek New Testament and the *New American Standard Bible* follow this reading).

And he answered and said, “I will not.” But later, after changing his mind, he went off. The first son had a change of heart and eventually followed His father’s wishes.

Matt. 21:30 And he went to his other son and said the same thing. He answered and said, ‘I will, sir.’ But he did not go.

And he went to his other son and said the same thing. He answered and said, ‘I will, sir.’ But he did not go. The second son agreed to do what his father asked, but never ended up doing it.

Matt. 21:31 Which of the two of them did the will of the father?” They said, “The first one.” He said to them, “Truly, I say to you, that the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering into the kingdom of God ahead of you.

Which of the two of them did the will of the father?" They said, "The first one." He said to them, "Truly, I say to you, that the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering into the kingdom of God ahead of you. He could not have given a more offensive comparison.

Matt. 21:32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax gatherers and prostitutes believed him. But you, when you had seen this, neither changed your mind afterward so as to believe in him.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of the last phrase *But you, when you had seen this, neither changed your mind afterward to believe in him*. Some manuscripts read *But you, when you had seen this, at last repented so as to believe in him*.

For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax gatherers and prostitutes believed him. But you, when you had seen this, neither changed your mind afterward so as to believe in him. John's message was not received by the religious leaders but it was received by those who initially had rejected the way of God.

The Parable Of The Wicked Tenants (21:33-46)

Jesus presents another parable to illustrate His point.

Matt. 21:33 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, placed a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, built a watchtower, rented it to tenants, and then went away on a journey.

"Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, placed a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, built a watchtower, rented it to tenants, and then went away on a journey. Landowners generally lived far away and had little personal contact with their workers. He addressed this parable to the rulers of Israel (21:23) reminding them they are mere custodians appointed by God.

Matt. 21:34 And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the tenants to receive his fruit.

And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the tenants to receive his fruit. The landowners had the legal power over their tenants.

Matt. 21:35 And the tenants took his slaves, beating one, and killing another one, and stoning another one.

And the tenants took his slaves, beating one, and killing another one, and stoning another one. Here the tenants act as if they are the ones with power.

Matt. 21:36 He sent again other slaves, more than the first time, and they did the same to them.

He sent again other slaves, more than the first time, and they did the same to them. Israel martyred most of its prophets (Acts 7).

Matt. 21:37 Finally, he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

Finally, he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ The son would command respect.

Matt. 21:38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said among themselves, “This is the heir, come let us kill him and take his inheritance.”

But when the tenants saw the son, they said among themselves, “This is the heir, come let us kill him and take his inheritance.” Tenants presume they will inherit the land. The story paints them as terribly wicked and stupid. The landlord could have stipulated someone else to inherit the vineyard or representatives from the emperor could have seized it. This is probable not an illustration taken from real-life events.

Matt. 21:39 And they took him, and threw him outside of the vineyard, and killed him.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts reverse the order in this verse *And they took him and killed him and then threw him outside of the vineyard.*

And they took him, and threw him outside of the vineyard, and killed him. Death outside of the camp.

Matt. 21:40 Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” What will be their fate?

Matt. 21:41 They said to him, “The evil ones he will miserably destroy, and he will rent his vineyard to other tenants, who will pay back to him the fruits at the proper times.”

They said to him, “The evil ones he will miserably destroy, and he will rent his vineyard to other tenants, who will pay back to him the fruits at the proper times.” They pronounce their own judgment.

Matt. 21:42 Jesus said, “Have you not read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone which the builders rejected, this one became the cornerstone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’

Jesus said, “Have you not read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone which the builders rejected, this one became the cornerstone; this came

about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’ Jesus is the rejected stone that will become the foundation for the new work of God—the church.

Matt. 21:43 Therefore I say to you, that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and will be given to a nation that produces its fruits.

Therefore I say to you, that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and will be given to a nation that produces its fruits. A very strong statement! The New Testament church, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, will now be the people that God is working through—not the nation Israel.

Matt. 21:44 And the one falling upon the stone will be broken to pieces, but on whom it falls will be ground to powder.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have this verse.

And the one falling upon the stone will be broken to pieces, but on whom it falls will be ground to powder. You fall upon the stone, or the stone will fall upon you.

The Response Of The Religious Leaders (21:45,46)

Knowing that the parable was aimed at them, the religious leaders wish to arrest Jesus, but they cannot because of the crowd.

Matt. 21:45 And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard this parable, they knew that he was talking about them.

And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard this parable, they knew that he was talking about them. They did not miss the point.

Matt. 21:46 And they were seeking to seize him, but they feared the crowd, for they regarded him to be a prophet.

And they were seeking to seize him, but they feared the crowd, for they regarded him to be a prophet. His time had not yet come.

Summary to Chapter 21

Jesus finally reaches Jerusalem. For the first time He allows Himself to be acknowledged publicly when He enters the city. This, however, was not a triumphal entry in the Roman sense of the term—a conquering military hero. Rather He came in meek and mild riding upon a donkey.

After entering He cleanses the temple overturning the tables of the money changers.

He then curses the fig tree in a symbolic gesture against the hypocrisy of the people.

The Gospel According To Matthew

The religious leaders want to know where He derives His authority. Jesus answers them by asking them a question about the authority of John the Baptist.

The chapter closes with the parable of the two sons and the wicked tenants. After the religious leaders heard the parable they attempted to seize Jesus, but the crowd kept them from going forward.

**Matthew
Chapter 22**

This chapter consists of Jesus teaching a parable of the wedding banquet, the question of taxes, the greatest commandment, and the issue of the resurrection of the dead. Jesus will then question the religious leaders.

The Parable Of The Wedding Banquet (22:1-14)

Jesus continues to teach by parables.

Matt. 22:1 And answering, Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying,

And answering, Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, This parable continues the dialogue between Jesus and the religious rulers. Now, after giving the two previous parables (21:28-43), He is about to comment upon their failure to meet God's requirement and the composition of the new people of God.

Matt. 22:2 The kingdom of heaven is like a king, who made a wedding banquet for his son.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a king, who made a wedding banquet for his son. As in 8:11, and in 25:1 ff., the banquet symbolizes the blessedness of God's salvation.

Matt. 22:3 And he sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the marriage feast, and they were not willing to come.

And he sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the marriage feast, Those who had been invited had already received and accepted an earlier invitation.

and they were not willing to come. They had a change of heart.

Matt. 22:4 Again he sent other slaves saying, "Say to the ones who were invited, 'Behold, I have prepared my meal, my bulls and the fatted ones have been slaughtered, and I have prepared all things. Come unto the wedding feast.'

Again he sent other slaves saying, "Say to the ones invited, behold, I have prepared my meal, my bulls and the fatted ones have been slaughtered, and I have prepared all things, It was customary to tell the ones invited when the meal was ready.

come unto the wedding feast. The second invitation (vs. 3) is now repeated to those who have been invited.

Matt. 22:5 But they paid no attention and went away—one to his own field, another to his business.

But they paid no attention The idea is one of culpable negligence or indifference (Hill)

and went away— This makes a double refusal. Although they originally agreed to come, they have now refused the invitation twice.

one to his own field, another to his business. They have gone back on their original promise as with the case of the disobedient son (21:30) and the tenants (21:35,36). This would make the parable aimed at the religious person, not those who rejected the Lord's word at their first hearing. They gave a higher priority to their farm and business.

Matt. 22:6 And the remaining ones seized his slaves, shamefully treated them and killed them.

And the remaining ones seized his slaves, Those that neglected the offer but did not go away.

shamefully treated them Again a reference to Israel's shameful treatment of God's messengers—the prophets.

and killed them. Some were killed.

Matt. 22:7 And the king became angry, and sent his army and they destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

And the king became angry, and sent his army and they destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Jesus made it clear that the rejection of Him would result in the judgment of them and their city. This statement of judgment recalls the preceding parable (21:35,39).

Matt. 22:8 Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding banquet is prepared, but the ones who were invited are not worthy.'

Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding banquet is prepared, but the ones who were invited are not worthy.' Now He picks up the theme of a different, unexpected people to take the place of those who had been originally invited and who had originally said they would come.

Matt. 22:9 Therefore, go to the street corners and whoever you find, invite them to the wedding banquet.'

Therefore, go to the street corners This probable refers to the intersections of the road in the center of town—the place where the poor would gather.

and whoever you find, invite them to the wedding banquet.' The gospel goes out to everyone, both Jew and Gentile.

Matt. 22:10 So those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all whom they found, both good and evil, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *the marriage feast was filled* instead *the wedding hall was filled*.

So those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all whom they found, both good and evil, The fact that they gathered both evil and good will necessitate a further explanation of the meaning of the parable.

and the wedding hall was filled with guests. The wedding can now proceed.

Matt. 22:11 But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there that was not clothed with a wedding garment.

But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there that was not clothed with a wedding garment. A wedding garment was not a special type of garment but was rather clean clothes. To come in dirty clothes was an insult to the host. "The question of how the guests could obtain wedding garments, since they were just called in from the streets is irrelevant to the parable" (Hill). In this context, the wedding garment is probably a symbol of righteousness.

Matt. 22:12 And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here not having a wedding garment?' And he was speechless.

And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here not having a wedding garment?' Each guest was responsible for his own clothing. As the new tenants were supposed to produce fruit, those who come to God's banquet must have the appropriate change of life. Coming in the old, unconverted nature will not be satisfactory for admittance. Without a genuine conversion, there is not access to the kingdom of heaven.

And he was speechless. No case to be made by the man who did not belong.

Matt. 22:13 Then the king said to his servants, "Tie his feet and hands, and throw him out into the outer darkness; where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.

Then the king said to his servants, "Tie his feet and hands, and throw him out into the outer darkness; where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. As with the parable of the weeds and the net, it is only the final judgment that will determine who belongs in God's kingdom.

Matt. 22:14 For many are invited, but few are chosen.

For many are invited, Those who went back to their farm and business were invited.

but few are chosen. In each case the fault for not coming was their own. However the word chosen suggests that their fate was based on someone else's choice (God's). This raises the familiar problem of the doctrine of

election. The word translated “chosen” (Greek *elektōi*) could be seen as a technical term for the believers. This term then would emphasize not the means of achieving salvation, but rather it would be stressing the fact of salvation. The message of the parable would be the same as the parable of the sower—many who first start out claiming to be genuine believers eventually reveal their true nature by lack of fruitfulness.

The Question of Paying Taxes (22:15-22)

The issue of paying taxes now arises.

Matt. 22:15 Then the Pharisees went out and took counsel so that they might entrap him in his word.

Then the Pharisees went out and took counsel so that they might entrap him in his word. It was the imposition of direct Roman taxation that sparked the revolt of Judas of Galilee in A.D. 6, and Judas ideology was the basis for many a resistance movement that arose which we place under the general title of “zealots.” To approve of Roman taxation was to come out against the will of the people who detested paying taxes to the hated Romans. No doubt, the questioners felt that Jesus would lose many of His followers had He agreed to Roman taxation. If He agreed with the popular sentiment of not paying taxes to Rome, He could be accused of treason. They could take His statement to the Roman governor to use it against Him. This question, therefore was a clever trap.

Matt. 22:16 And they sent their disciples to him together with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true, and the way of God you teach in truth, and do not care about anyone, because you do not have regard to anyone.

And they sent their disciples to him together with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true, and the way of God you teach in truth, and do not care about anyone, because you do not have regard to anyone. The Herodians, which appear only in Matthew, were part of Herod’s supporters and consequently owed their allegiance to Rome

saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true, and the way of God you teach in truth, and do not care about anyone, Note the words of flattery used.

because you do not have regard to anyone. This idiomatic expression means, “to show partiality.”

Matt. 22:17 Tell us, therefore, what you think? Is it right to pay the poll tax to Caesar or not?

Tell us, therefore, what you think? Is it right to pay the poll tax to Caesar or not? Tax is *singular* in Greek, thus referring to the hated poll tax. There were other taxes but this one was the main contention between the

Jews and the Romans—it stood for their political subjection to a foreign power.

Matt. 22:18 Jesus, knowing their evil, said, “Why are tempting me, hypocrites?

Jesus, knowing their evil, said, “Why are tempting me, hypocrites? He sees through the trap. Hypocrites has the idea of insincerity.

Matt. 22:19 Show me the coin used for the poll tax.” And they brought him a denarius.

Show me the coin used for the poll tax.” And they brought him a denarius. Notice He did not have a coin. The money used to pay the tax was a Roman denarius.

Matt. 22:20 And he asked them, “Whose image and whose inscription is this?”

And he asked them, “Whose image and whose inscription is this?” Whose image is on this coin? The inscription would have read as follows (note the V represents our U) :

TICAESARDIVI AVGFAVGSTVS
PONTIF MAXIM

Tiberius Caesar Augustus
High Priest
Son of the Divine Augustus

Matt. 22:21 And they said to him, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Give therefore to Caesar that which belongs to Caesar, and to God the things that belong to God.”

And they said to him, “Caesar’s.” The image of Caesar was on the coin which strict Jews found objectionable because it bore a portrait of the Emperor on the front side while the back side had him seated on a throne (the ten commandments forbids making images of any Deity). For normal business copper coins were used that did not have the image of Caesar.

Then he said to them, “Give therefore to Caesar that which belongs to Caesar, Since they were using Caesar’s money they should pay his taxes.

and to God the things that belong to God.” As Caesar deserves his, so also does God. Jesus shows that both the secular and the sacred have their proper place. Honoring God does not mean dishonoring the government in power (see 1 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 2:17). In addition, the answer Jesus gave showed that the Emperor should be paid that which belongs to him. Yet some of the things that the Emperor claimed (such as Divine honor) did not belong to him but to God alone. Therefore believers are to refuse to give worship to the Emperor. Consequently the title Pontifex Maximus

(Highest Priest) is to be rejected by those who follow God. When it comes to choosing between the two, the believer must choose God (Acts 5:29).

Matt. 22:22 And after hearing this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

And after hearing this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away. They marveled at the cleverness of the answer. He did not totally alienate the Zealots and He was not guilty of insurrection against Rome. Furthermore, He laid down an important principle for His followers—we should give what we owe to both God and Caesar.

The Sadducees Question Jesus About The Resurrection (22:23-33)

After quieting the Pharisees, the Sadducees bring their question to Jesus.

Matt. 22:23 In that same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him, saying,

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *saying* some manuscripts read *who say that*.

In that same day This would be Tuesday of Passion Week

the Sadducees, The Sadducees will now make their attempt to trick Jesus. They were the secularists of that day..

who say there is no resurrection, The Sadducees believed that the soul perishes along with the body (Josephus, *Antiquities*, xviii. 16). Their question is no more serious than that of Herodians.

came to him, saying, They now bring him a question they thought was unanswerable. It was designed to ridicule the belief in the resurrection.

Matt. 22:24 saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies without having children, his brother will marry his widow and will raise up children for his brother.’

saying, “Teacher, Like the Pharisees they address Jesus with the designation, “teacher.” They do not address Him as Rabbi, Lord, or Son of David as others in Matthew’s gospel have addressed Him.

Moses said, ‘If a man dies without having children, his brother will marry his widow and will raise up children for his brother.’ This is based upon Deuteronomy 25:5,6.

Matt. 22:25 Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one died after marrying, and since he did not leave behind children, he left his widow to his brother.

Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one died after marrying, and since he did not leave behind children, he left his widow to his brother. His brother would have married his widow.

Matt. 22:26 The same thing happened to the second and the third brother, and so on until the seventh.

The same thing happened to the second and the third brother, and so on until the seventh. The story continues throughout the whole family. One would think that the brothers would get suspicious!

Matt. 22:27 Finally, the woman died.

Finally, the woman died. She outlasted them all.

Matt. 22:28 Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven? For they all had her.

Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven? For they all had her. They thought they had Him.

Matt. 22:29 Jesus answered and said, “You are in error, because you do not know either the Scriptures or the power of God.

Jesus answered and said, “You are in error, The word translated “error” is the Greek *planao* where we get the English word “planet” (wandering star). They should have known that the law of levirate marriage has nothing to do with life after death.

because you do not know either the Scriptures or the power of God. This is one of the greatest verses in the entire Scripture. Jesus lists the source of all error. Those who deny the truth of God’s Word either do not know His power, or are ignorant of what His Word says. How true this is today! People who reject the Christian faith are ignorant of these two things—they do not know what the Bible really says and they do not know the power of the God of the Bible.

Matt. 22:30 For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but they are like the angels in heaven.

Note on a variant reading: After *angels* some manuscripts read *of God*.

For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but they are like the angels in heaven. There is a difference in sexual relationships in heaven. People, like angels, do not marry.

Matt. 22:31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying,

But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, The Sadducees based their belief on

the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament). Jesus is going to show them that the Torah taught the resurrection of the dead.

Matt. 22:32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *He is not the God of the dead*, some manuscripts read *God is not the God of the dead*.

I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ Jesus bases His argument upon the present tense of the verb.

He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” God is, not was, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were long since dead when He spoke to Moses in the bush.

Matt. 22:33 And when the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

And when the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching. The crowds again respond with amazement.

The Greatest Commandment (22:34-36)

A lawyer will now question Jesus about the greatest commandment.

Matt. 22:34 And when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together,

And when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together, The Pharisees will now try their question.

Matt. 22:35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked a question testing him.

Note on variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the word *lawyer*.

and one of them, a lawyer, asked a question testing him. A lawyer was a scholar of the law. Like the two previous groups, the question was meant to entrap Him.

Matt. 22:36 “Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the law?”

“Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the law?” This legitimate question was frequently discussed by Rabbi’s.

Matt. 22:37 And he said to him, “You will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all you mind.

And he said to him, “You will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all you mind. This refers to the total person. Every aspect of our life is to be utilized in following the Lord.

Matt. 22:38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

This is the first and greatest commandment. Loving God is primary.

Matt. 22:39 And the second is similar to it, ‘You will love your neighbor as yourself.’

And the second is similar to it, ‘You will love your neighbor as yourself.’ Likewise, we should love our fellow man.

Matt. 22:40 All the Law and the Prophets hang upon these two commandments.”

All the Law and the Prophets hang upon these two commandments.”
These two are the basis for all the other commandments.

The Question Of Jesus To The Religious Leaders (22:41-46)

Jesus will now ask them a question regarding David’s Son.

Matt. 22:41 And while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus questioned them.

And while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus questioned them. Now it is time for Jesus to question them.

Matt. 22:42 saying, “What do you think concerning the Christ? Whose Son is he?” And they said, “The Son of David.”

saying, “What do you think concerning the Christ? He will now ask them their idea of the Messiah.

Whose Son is he?” Who does the Messiah descend from?

And they said, “The Son of David.” They correctly state the identity of the Messiah, He is David’s Son.

Matt. 22:43 He said to them, “Why then did David, in the Spirit, call him, ‘Lord,’ saying,

He said to them, “Why then did David, Jesus attributes the authorship of this Psalm to David—something liberals deny.

in the Spirit, This was done by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

call him, ‘Lord,’ saying, How can your son by your master?

Matt. 22:44 ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I place your enemies under my feet?” ’

‘For the Lord said to my Lord, Jesus will cite from Psalm 110 (109 in the Septuagint), written by David. Here “the Lord” is not Yahweh but Adonai.

“Sit at my right hand, The right hand was the place of authority.

until I place your enemies under my feet?’ This pictures an enemy lying in the dust before someone.

Matt. 22:45 If therefore, David calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his son?”

If therefore, David calls him ‘Lord,’ If David calls his son, the Messiah, Lord

how can he be his son?” He is not saying the Messiah cannot be David’s son. The one whom David called Lord (not *Yahweh* but *Adonai* “Master”) shows that He has a superior position to David. Therefore, the Son of David, is superior to David himself.

Matt. 22:46 And no one was able to answer him a word, neither did anyone dare any more to ask him a question from that day.

And no one was able to answer him a word, neither did anyone dare any more to ask him a question from that day. He has silenced His critics. They quit while they were behind.

Summary to Chapter 22

Parabolic teaching continues. He gives the parable of the wedding banquet where the ones originally invited decided not to attend. Others were invited in their place.

The question of paying taxes comes next. Jesus does not fall into the trap that the religious leaders laid for Him.

Another question comes to Him—this time from the Sadducees. Again Jesus stifles their attempt to trick Him. Jesus then answers a question about the greatest commandment. First we are to love God above all else and then we are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Jesus has His own question about David’s son that they are unable to answer. After this confrontation, the religious leaders asked Him no further questions.

**Matthew
Chapter 23**

Jesus Warns About The Behavior Of The Religious Leaders (23:1-12)

Jesus begins to denounce the religious leaders in front of the multitudes. He will speak to the crowds about the doctrine and behavior of these religious rulers.

Matt. 23:1 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples,

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples From the debate and parables of chapters 21-22 against the religious rulers, we now move to direct attack. He will publicly expose the failings and hypocrisy of the religious leaders. Jesus addresses His remarks to the disciples and the crowds, not to the Pharisees (in vs. 2-12).

However in 13-36 the style changes to a direct address against them in the form of seven denunciations. The target of the attack is the legalism of the Pharisees.

Matt. 23:2 saying, “The Scribes and Pharisees sit upon the seat of Moses.

saying, “The Scribes and Pharisees Strictly speaking, only the Scribes were the successors of Moses. Many of the Scribes were also Pharisees but not all Pharisees were Scribes.

sit They consider themselves Moses successors therefore they occupy his seat.

upon the seat of Moses. Moses seat is a figurative expression for the teaching authority, or those officially responsible for interpreting and applying the laws of Moses. They were heirs of Moses authority by an unbroken tradition.

Matt. 23:3 Therefore, all things whatever they say to you, do and keep, but do not do according to their works, for they say, but do not do.

Therefore, all things whatever they say to you, do and keep, Jesus accepts the legitimacy of their function but questions the way they exercise it.

but do not do according to their works, Follow their words, not their actions

for they say, but do not do. They do not practice what they preach. “Do as I say, not as I do!”

Matt. 23:4 For they tie up heavy loads, that are hard to carry, and place them upon the shoulders of men. But they themselves are not willing to lift their finger to move them.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the phrase *hard to carry*.

For they tie up heavy loads, Compare that to the yoke of Jesus (11:28-30).

that are hard to carry, and place them upon the shoulders of men. But they themselves are not willing to lift their finger to move them. Their legalism cannot help lighten the loads.

Matt. 23:5 For they perform all their works to be seen of people; for they make their phylacteries wide, and the tassels of their garments long;

For they perform all their works to be seen of people; The thing that inspires their works is the praise of others, not God.

for they make their phylacteries wide, The phylacteries (*tefillim*) are small leather boxes containing scrolls of texts from Exodus and Deuteronomy. “Make wide” could refer to the size of the straps by which they were bound to the forehead and left arm of Jewish men when they pray, or it could refer to wearing them during the rest of the day not only during the prescribed hours of prayer.

and the tassels of their garments long; The size of the tassels was a matter of debate among the Rabbi’s.

Matt. 23:6 For they love the chief place at the banquets, and the first seats in the synagogues.

For they love the chief place at the banquets, This is in contrast to the “last place” which the Lord told His disciples to take at the banquets (Luke 14:7 ff.).

and the first seats in the synagogues. Compare this to Jesus’ continual comments about how disciples in the kingdom are to place themselves last, not first.

Matt. 23:7 And the greetings in the market places, and to be called ‘Rabbi,’ by people.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have the words *Rabbi*, *Rabbi* instead of the one *Rabbi*.

And the greetings in the market places, They loved the attention.

and to be called ‘Rabbi,’ by people. Rabbi means “my master.”

Matt. 23:8 But you yourselves do not be called ‘Rabbi;’ for there is one teacher for you, and you are all brothers.

But you yourselves The *you* is emphatic in Greek.

do not be called ‘Rabbi;’ We are not to consider ourselves as anyone else’s master.

for there is one teacher for you, and you are all brothers. The followers of Jesus are to recognize that there is only one authoritative teacher.

Matt. 23:9 And do not call anyone your ‘father’ on the earth, for One is your Father—He who is in heaven.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of the first use of *your father*, some manuscripts read *a father to you* while a few manuscripts do not have the word *your* at all.

And do not call anyone your ‘father’ on the earth, Father in the sense of a title of honor.

for One is your Father—He who is in heaven. Likewise they are to recognize only one heavenly Father. The verse warns about giving men a title that belongs to God and Him alone.

Matt. 23:10 And do not be called teachers, because one is your Teacher—the Christ.

And do not be called teachers, Again we are not to take titles belonging to God. This is repeating what He has said in verse eight but in a slightly different form.

because one is your Teacher—the Christ. There is only one authoritative teacher.

Matt. 23:11 And he who is greatest among you will be your servant.

And he who is greatest among you will be your servant. This is a shorter form of what Jesus has already said (20:26). Disciples of the kingdom should live in total contrast with the Pharisees who attempted to lord over others.

Matt. 23:12 And whoever will exalt himself, will be humbled, and whoever will humble himself, will be exalted.

And whoever will exalt himself, will be humbled, and whoever will humble himself, will be exalted. The status-conscious Pharisees and Scribes should not be the standard for the disciples of Jesus. True greatness lies in humility and servanthood.

Jesus Condemns The Hypocrisy Of The Religious Leaders (23:13-36)

A series of woes will now come from Jesus denouncing the hypocrisy of those who were the spiritual leaders of the country. These people, who were supposed to be the guardians and interpreters of God's law, had not lived up to their position. This direct denunciation, for the most part, is done in the second person plural (you).

Matt. 23:13 Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you are shutting up the kingdom of heaven before humankind. For you yourselves are not entering in nor are you permitting the ones coming in to enter.

Woe to you, The series of woes given are similar to those of the Old Testament prophets (Isaiah 5:8-23; Hab 2:6-19). In all these cases, the tone is one of condemnation. The series of woes are the opposite of the series of blessings that our Lord earlier gave (5:3-12). The beatitudes are the correct way to please God while the way of the Pharisees is the wrong way.

Scribes and Pharisees, Now He speaks directly to the Scribes and Pharisees. The first three woes deal with their teachings.

The question as to whether the Pharisees were present for this denunciation has been answered in several ways by commentators:

1. Many simply avoid answering the question.
2. Others believe the Pharisees were present but kept themselves in the background.
3. They are present and Jesus speaks face to face with them.
4. They were not present at all. Their presence is mentioned at 22:41-46 but nowhere is it noted in chapter 23. If this be the case, all seven woes were given for rhetorical affect.

hypocrites! In six of these woes Jesus calls them hypocrites. The term used by Jesus could mean:

1. His opponents simply did not know Him when they slandered His character. This would allow them to be making an honest mistake similar to the Apostle Paul (1 Timothy 1:13-15).
2. They knowingly and wickedly slandered Him. When we consider the other uses of the term in Matthew (6:2,5, 16; 15:7,8; 22:18) the meaning is clear—they were frauds', deceivers, those who put on a form of godliness but their hearts were far from Him. Therefore there is no indication here, or anywhere in Matthew, that these people persecuted Jesus out of honest motives.

Because you are shutting up the kingdom of heaven before humankind. It describes the effect of Pharisaic legalism on entering the kingdom of heaven. Luke tells us they are taking away the key which gives the knowledge of salvation (11:52). They had failed in their divinely appointed task of teaching Israel.

For you yourselves are not entering in This direct rebuke to them continues the harsh things Jesus has already said about their ways.

nor are you permitting the ones coming in to enter. Jesus has brought the true way of salvation and the Pharisees, by their teaching, have made it impossible for those who follow them to enter in to His salvation. The implication is that the true way of salvation comes only through Jesus and not these religious leaders.

This does not mean, however, that the Pharisees are stronger than God in the sense that they themselves can keep people out of the kingdom of heaven—the Pharisee's cannot thwart God's program!

Both in their hypocritical lifestyle and their doctrine (works equals righteousness) the Pharisees were opposed to Jesus

Matt. 23:14 [Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.]

Note on a variant reading: This verse, which is in Mark 12:40, is lacking in some manuscripts of Matthew.

Matt. 23:15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you travel over the land and the sea to win one convert, and when it happens, you have made him the twofold son of Gehenna as yourselves.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! The second woe will reveal the results of their hypocritical teaching.

Because you travel over the land and the sea to win one convert, There is nothing wrong in making converts. Jesus will tell His disciples to go out and make converts (see 28:19). God had instructed His people, from the beginning, to have a missionary faith (see Genesis 22:18; Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 19:34; 1 Kings 8:41-43; Ezra 6:21; Psalm 72:8-17; 87; Isaiah 54:2,3; 56:3-8; 60:1-3; Jeremiah 39:15-18; Joel 2:28-32; Amos 9:11, 12; Zechariah 9:23; Malachi 1:11). There is also the example of Jonah whom God sent to the people of Nineveh.

These converts or proselytes can be put into a couple of different categories. Some were called worshippers of God (Acts 16:14; 18:7)

and when it happens, you have made him the twofold son of Gehenna as yourselves. But the second woe concerns the type of religious converts they make—one destined for hell. The idea of a twofold

son may refer to the frequent tendency of the disciple to be more zealous than his teacher. In this case their converts would be all the more perverted in their teaching.

Matt. 23:16 “Woe to you, blind guides, the ones who say, ‘Whoever will swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever will swear by the gold in the temple, he is obligated to perform it.’

“Woe to you, blind guides, The next woe concerns their blindness with respect to oaths.

the ones who say, ‘Whoever will swear by the temple, This subject had already been dealt with in 5:33-37. The background of this denunciation is the substitution of trivial oaths for serious ones.

it is nothing; but whoever will swear by the gold in the temple, The gold to them was the most important.

he is obligated to perform it.’ They believed the temple was not as important than the gold that was in it.

Matt. 23:17 “Fools and blind (ones)! For what is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

“Fools and blind (ones)! The idea behind these terms is not so much an insult as to describe their actual situation.

For what is greater, Jesus is going to show them the absurdity of their debates over this issue. He again uses the typical Rabbinic practice of asking them a question.

the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? He illustrates this nit picking feature of the Pharisees. Do they really think the gold is more important than the temple itself?

Matt. 23:18 And, ‘Whoever will swear by the altar, it is nothing, but whoever will swear by the gift that is upon the altar he is obligated to perform it.’

And, ‘Whoever will swear by the altar, it is nothing, but whoever will swear by the gift that is upon the altar he is obligated to perform it.’ They made the gift more important than the altar.

Matt. 23:19 You blind (ones)! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift?

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *Fools* before *Blind ones*.

You blind (ones)! Which is greater: Again they need to answer the question.

the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift? The answer is obvious—the altar is greater than the gift offered on it.

Matt. 23:20 Therefore, he who swears by the altar, is swearing by it, and by everything that is on it.

Therefore, he who swears by the altar, is swearing by it, and by everything that is on it. If you swear by the altar you are swearing by everything connected with it.

Matt. 23:21 And he who swears by the temple, is swearing by it, and by the one who is dwelling in it.

And he who swears by the temple, is swearing by it, and by the one who is dwelling in it. Those who swear by the temple are also swearing by God.

Matt. 23:22 And he who swears by heaven, is swearing by the throne of God, and by the One sitting upon it.

And he who swears by heaven, Heaven again is used symbolically as God's throne. If you swear by one, you are swearing by the other.

is swearing by the throne of God, and by the One sitting upon it. If you swear by heaven then you are also swearing the One who sits on the heavenly throne.

Matt. 23:23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you pay a tenth of the mint, dill and cummin, and you have neglected the weightier matters of the Law—judgment and mercy and faith. These things are necessary to do while not neglecting the others.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! The fourth woe concerns their hypocrisy in tithing

Because you pay a tenth of the Jesus is not denouncing the fact that they tithe. It was what they were tithing that was the problem.

mint, This was a small garden herb. His problem with them is in their sense of proportion.

dill and cummin, More small garden herbs. All three of these were used to flavor food.

The Pharisees overdid the ordinance to tithe (Leviticus 27:30-33; Deuteronomy 14:22-29). Nothing in the law of Moses commands to tithe such things as these. The Old Testament context commands tithing of grain, wine, and oil—the three great crops of the field not the garden herbs. As was true with other matters such as hand-washing, fasting, the Sabbath observance, and a host of other issues, these religious leaders went beyond what the law commanded.

and you have neglected the weightier matters of the Law— What made matters worse was their lack of stress on the real important issues—this was the concern of Jesus.

judgment Instead of the three things they were observing, Jesus lets them know the three things that are missing. The first is judgment or justice. They were unjust with their treatment of John the Baptist as they will shortly be with Jesus.

and mercy God had told the people before that they desired mercy rather than sacrifice. He did not mean to say that He did not want them to sacrifice, rather He wanted them to remember to be merciful along with offering their sacrifices. The Pharisees had obviously forgotten this truth.

and faith. Instead of trusting God to take care of them, they were taking the matters into their own hands with all sorts of schemes to benefit themselves.

These three attributes, judgment, mercy and faith, would be another summary of the meaning of the law. Again it was not the outward show that God was looking for but rather the inward motivation by which people acted.

These things are necessary to do He is stressing that they have forgotten to take care of the more important issues. Micah 6:8 states the matter clearly: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what the Lord requires of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

while not neglecting the others. Yet the other parts are to be observed. The commandments God have given do not have to be removed, they merely have to be obeyed with correct spirit.

Matt. 23:24 You blind guides! You strain out the gnat, but swallow the entire camel.

You blind guides! You strain out the gnat, He shows their lack of sense for proportion by this picture of straining out the smallest of creatures out of a drink to avoid impurity (Leviticus 11:20-23).

but swallow the entire camel. Yet a camel (also impure Leviticus 11:4) is swallowed whole. The joke may have been aided by an Aramaic pun on *qalma* (gnat) and *gamlā* (camel).

Matt. 23:25 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of the word translated *self-indulgence* or *intemperance* there are other readings in the manuscripts. These include *unrighteousness*, *uncleanness* or *evil*.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and the dish, “Rabbinic debates on the relative importance of the inside and outside of utensils in matters of ceremonial purification are well documented” (France, p. 329).

but inside they are full of greed Again the stress on the inward aspect, not the outward show.

and self-indulgence. The fifth woe focuses on the difference between the external and internal.

Matt. 23:26 You blind Pharisee! First cleanse the inside of the cup and the dish, in order that the outside may also be clean.

Note on a variant reading: After the phrase *inside of the cup* some manuscripts read *and of the dish*.

You Jesus now addresses the individual Pharisee switching from the plural to the singular.

blind Pharisee! First cleanse the inside of the cup and the dish, in order that the outside

may also be clean. Take care of the more important thing first, the inside.

Matt. 23:27 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of bones of dead men and all uncleanness.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, Tombs were whitewashed regularly at festival times to ensure that passers by did not inadvertently touch them and so become defiled (Mishnah *Shekalim* 1:1).

which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of bones of dead men and all uncleanness. The reference could also be to funeral urns or bone containers which were beautified with a marble and lime plaster.

Matt. 23:28 In this same way, on the outside you appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

In this same way, on the outside you appear righteous to men, A very telling comparison.

but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Outwardly religious, inwardly lawless.

Matt. 23:29 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! This woe describes the hostility they have to God's true messengers and predicts the outcome.

You build the tombs of the prophets They would build monuments to the prophets who had been killed. In the first century there was a great emphasis on building beautiful tombs. This practice included those who had been long-dead. For example, Herod built new marble monument over David's tomb (Josephus, Antiquities. 16. 179-182).

and decorate the graves of the righteous. In doing this, they would acknowledge that these people were righteous.

Matt. 23:30 And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers in the shedding of the blood of the prophets.'

And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, They claim they would have acted different from those who came before.

we would not have been partakers in the shedding of the blood of the prophets.' If they would have been there, these prophets and righteous ones would not have been killed.

Matt. 23:31 So that you are testifying against yourselves that you are the descendants of the ones who murdered the prophets.

So that you are testifying against yourselves that you are the descendants of the ones who murdered the prophets. Though they symbolically honor the prophets they are the ones who kill them. For all their pious words, these current leaders are still the sons of the fathers who killed God's messengers.

Matt. 23:32 You yourselves, then, fill up, the measure of your fathers!

You yourselves, then, fill up, the measure of your fathers! There is much irony in this command of Jesus. They will indeed fill up the complete measure of what their fathers have previously done—by killing God's ultimate messenger, the Messiah. Consequently, Jesus' own generation will be the ones who will incur the ultimate punishment from God (the destruction of the city, temple and the exile of the people).

Matt. 23:33 Snakes! Offspring of vipers! How will you escape the judgment of Gehenna?

Snakes! Offspring of vipers! How will you escape the judgment of Gehenna? In 3:7 John the Baptist pictured them as a brood of vipers fleeing wrath, Jesus says their flight is futile.

Matt. 23:34 Because of this, behold, I myself am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes. Some of them you will kill and crucify; and others you will flog in your synagogues and will persecute from town to town.

Because of this, behold, I myself am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes. Some of them you will kill and crucify; and others you will flog in your synagogues and will persecute from town to town. Jesus has been sending forth disciples in the same role as the Old Testament prophets.

Matt. 23:35 So that there will come upon you all the righteous blood that had been shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, to the blood of Zechariah, son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

So that there will come upon you all the righteous blood that had been shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, to the blood of Zechariah, son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. The cumulative effect of the rejection and murder of all God's spokesmen is graphically traced from Abel to Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:22), who were the first and last martyrs of the Old Testament. There is a problem as to the exact relationship of Zechariah with Barachiah (see question at the end of this chapter).

Matt. 23:36 For truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

For truly I say to you, all these things will come upon The coming of Jesus, and His rejection by His own people, will be climaxed in judgment that cannot be delayed.

this generation. In this context this seems to refer to those hearing His words.

Jesus Laments Over Jerusalem (23:37-39)

Jesus mourns over the city of Jerusalem and pronounces judgment upon the temple.

Matt. 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones the ones sent to her, how many times I desired to gather your children together, in the same manner as a hen gathers together her brood under her wings, but you were not willing.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones the ones sent to her, The fate of Jerusalem is now the subject. Jerusalem is representative of the nation.

how many times I desired to gather your children together, in the same manner as a hen gathers together her brood under her wings, but you were not willing. Please notice that they *would* not believe, it is not that they *could* not (see also John 5:40 where the responsibility of not believing is placed squarely on their shoulders).

Matt. 23:38 Behold, your house is left to you desolate.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the word *desolate*.

Behold, your house is left to you desolate. He is speaking of the destruction of the temple.

Matt. 23:39 For I say to you, you will not see me again from now until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'

For I say to you, you will not see me again from now until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' This will occur when He comes the second time.

Summary to Chapter 23

The strongest words of condemnation in the Bible are found in this passage. Jesus denounces the behavior of the religious leaders. He lists seven specific woes against them. Jesus shows their religiosity is done for the purpose of impressing others, rather than impressing God. As He earlier had taught His disciples, our righteous deeds need to be done in secret where God will reward us openly. The Pharisees received their payment in full by enjoying the acclaim of humanity rather than the Lord.

Finally, Jesus pronounces judgment upon the city and the temple, setting the stage for His discourse on the end of the age.

**Matthew
Chapter 24**

The Olivet Discourse is the fifth and last of the discourses of Jesus. As is true with the other discourses, it concludes with the formula “and when Jesus finished saying all these things” (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

It is known as the Olivet Discourse because Jesus gave it while sitting on the Mount of Olives. The time was right for Jesus to give such a discourse since His death was about to occur in a few days and it was necessary to let His disciples know about what was to come. Any optimism they might have had concerning an immediate kingdom coming had to be laid to rest. Though the crowds on Palm Sunday were shouting, “Hosanna,” and welcoming Him as their King, the same crowd, in a few days, would be shouting crucify.

In this last discourse Jesus will speak of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and the course of the present age. He will also give signs leading up to His Second Coming. Therefore a key theme in this passage is judgment: Judgment upon Jerusalem 24:1-35; judgment associated with His coming 24:36-51; two great parables of judgment 25:1-30; and the scene of the judgment of the nations 25:31-46. Judgment was a similar theme in chapter 23.

Mark records the story of the widow putting her money in the treasury between the time of the denunciation of the religious leaders and the Olivet discourse. Matthew does not record this account.

However chapter 23 and 24 are different in the fact that 23 is public teaching while 24 is done privately before only four of His disciples. All five discourses of Jesus were spoken only to the disciples (with the partial exception of chapter 13).

The Olivet discourse has been the subject of much discussion among interpreters, “This chapter and its synoptic parallels . . . present, in many respects, the most difficult problem in the evangelic records” (Bruce, p. 287).

**The Prediction Of The Temple’s
Destruction (24:1-3) [Mark 13, Luke 21]**

The first two verses of chapter 24 are closely related to the last two verses of chapter 23. Jesus told them their house would be left to them desolate (23:38) and now He will expand upon what that means.

The Jews were looking for the Messiah to rule and reign, not to die. They were waiting for Him to rule from the temple—not to see the temple destroyed. They expected Him to bring peace and prosperity. In contrast Jesus will predict times of great trouble before all this occurs. The rule of the Messiah will have to wait for another time. Thus He predicts judgment upon the temple after turning His back upon it and the city of Jerusalem.

Matt. 24:1 As Jesus went out from the temple and was proceeding away, his disciples came to him to show to him the buildings of the temple.

As Jesus went out from the temple Jesus has left the temple both physically and symbolically after pronouncing its destruction.

and was proceeding away, He was going away as One who did not ever intend to return.

his disciples came to him From Mark's gospel we discover that it is not all the disciples but rather only four of them (Peter, James, John, and Andrew).

to show to him the buildings of the temple. They probably wanted to change the attitude of gloom that has transpired with the various denunciations Jesus had just given. The disciples, obviously bothered by Jesus' last statement, come to Him to point out the beauty and magnitude of the structure. Even in the Roman world the temple was known for its beauty (2 Maccabees 2:22). Josephus described those who approached the temple at a distance saw it looking like a snow mountain topped with golden pinnacles. This monument was something Herod the Great had been building for over forty years, not for the glory of the Lord, but for the glory of himself.

Since Jesus and His disciples were from Galilee this magnificent structure would only be seen on the occasion of their visit to Jerusalem.

In their history, the Jews viewed the temple as invincible (see Jeremiah 7:4).

Matt. 24:2 And he answered and said to them, "You see all these things do you not? Truly I say to you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, until all is torn down."

And he answered and said to them, His response to their pointing out these beautiful buildings will now change their mood.

"You see all these things do you not?" The question requires an affirmative answer. In other words, "Take a good look at these buildings. You ask Me to look, now you look." He calls them things, not buildings, possibly showing His disdain for what Herod had done in enlarging the temple and its compound.

Truly I say to you, This is another one of Jesus' solemn statements which will shock those that hear Him.

there shall not be left here This is the strongest way the Greek language has of making a solemn statement.

one stone upon another, This speaks of total destruction. Robert Mounce makes an interesting observation:

Jesus responded with the prediction that the buildings would be brought to ruin. Not a single stone would be left intact. Critics who think that the bulk of Matthew comes from the early church rather than from Jesus himself are hard pressed to explain why there is no mention at this point of the burning of the temple. A . . . prophecy after the event would not have omitted such a specific item (Mounce, p. 221).

until all is torn down.” This strong statement of coming destruction must have been a great shock for the disciples because it was an obvious reference to judgment. They were familiar with Jeremiah’s prophecy of the destruction of the first temple (cf. Jeremiah 9:14; Micah 3:12), which occurred in 586 B.C., the thought of the destruction of the Second Temple could only indicate that final judgment, and the end of the age, was about to occur. The idea of “a stone upon a stone” indicates total destruction (and one that reverses the building process [Haggai 2:15]). According to Jesus, the symbol of God’s presence among His people would again be destroyed.

Some see the statement as not an exact description of what happened but rather a strong statement, couched in prophetic language, that the temple would be totally destroyed.

Jesus had already hinted of such things earlier—His symbolic cursing of the fig tree (21:12). Like the barren fig tree, the city and temple would be destroyed because they had only the appearance of fruit, not the reality. Bruce remarks.

The aim of any prophetic discourse Jesus might deliver at this crisis, like that of all true prophecy . . . [is] to forewarn and forearm the representatives of a new faith, so that they might not lose their heads or their hearts in an evil and perplexing time—not to gratify curiosity but to fortify against coming trial (Bruce, p. 287).

Matt. 24:3 While he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when these things shall be, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?”

While he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, A fitting place for the discourse concerning the end of the age since Zechariah 14:4 tells us that this is the spot that He will return (see also Acts 1:11). Therefore, the place where He gives instruction about His return is the site of His return.

It is natural for an interval of silence to follow such strong words. Jesus and His disciples are now on the other side of the brook Kidron. They are sitting on the slope of Mount of Olives facing toward Jerusalem.

the disciples came to him privately, saying, Jesus and His disciple were sitting apart from each other each thinking their own thoughts. Now they come to ask Him about what they have just heard Him say. Mark tells us that this was a private meeting with only four of His disciples—Peter, James, John and Andrew (Mark 13:3). They were no doubt troubled by His

reference to the destruction of the temple and wanted to know more about what He had said.

“Tell us, when these things shall be, “These things” repeats the same thing Jesus had previously said (vs. 2) with respect to the destruction of the temple. They want to know when this will happen.

and what will be the sign of your coming, What is *the* specific sign of Your coming. This particular Greek word *parousia* is only used in the Gospels in this chapter (vs 3, 27, 37, 39). *Coming* in this context is a technical term referring to the coming as King to set up His kingdom, the end of the present age and the beginning of the age to come. We will find the specific sign given in verse 15—the Abomination that causes desolation.

and of the end of the age?” The close of this present age and hence the beginning of the Messianic age. They seemingly associated the destruction of the city, the temple, and His coming with the end of the age. It appears they took for granted all these would happen together. Since they believed Jesus’ prediction of the coming destruction, they want to know *when* and *how* these things will occur. Therefore it seems the main thing they are asking is about the destruction of the temple, which they assumed, would be accompanied by the other events.

In the Greek text these two terms “the sign of Your coming” and “the end of the age” are linked together by one article—yet they are *not* speaking of the identical thing. A great number of commentators assume the Greek compels us to take the two words as identical, but this is not the case (see Wallace, pp. 270-290). Therefore, though the terms may overlap, there is a distinction between the two.

The term “end (consummation) of the age” is not found again in the remainder of the Olivet discourse. Matthew does use it elsewhere (13:39,40,49; 28:20). It refers to the end of this present age and the beginning of the Messianic age. The disciples asked these questions with the assumption that the events would occur simultaneously. In their mind the leveling of the city and temple would be the end of the present age.

Since the questions refer to both the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the coming of Christ—events that did not happen at the same time— the issue now arises as to how to interpret His answer (24:4-36). “The essential problem is that Matthew seems to move back and forth between an impending crisis (the fall of Jerusalem), and the end of the age when Jesus would return in judgment (Mounce, p. 221).

How To Understand The Olivet Discourse

There are four basic views on how to interpret the Olivet discourse.

1. The preterist (Latin for past) assumes everything in this discourse refers to the fall of Jerusalem and has nothing to do with His Second Coming. All things predicted in this discourse were fulfilled with the events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

2. The futurist view denies any reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and sees everything referring to His Second Coming. Jesus answers the question about His coming, which will not be at the fall of Jerusalem though the disciples assumed it would be.

3. The preterist-futurist view find references to both events vss. 4-14 refer to the present age vss. 15-28 the fall of Jerusalem, vs. 29-31 the Second coming, and vss. 32-41 the certainty of fulfillment of prophecy.

4. Others who hold the preterist-futurist view find a double reference in 15-28 to both the fall of Jerusalem and of the end of the age.

Within these major views there are many differences in details among the commentators.

Signs That Will Characterize The Age (24:4-14)

Jesus presents a list of signs that will characterize the age before the His coming.

Matt. 24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them, “See that no one leads you astray.

And Jesus answered and said to them, “See that no one leads you astray. He begins by warning them not to be deceived by premature claims of His coming. He tells them to “take heed” (see Hebrews 3:12). This warning about being misled occurs three times in this discourse (4,11,24). Previously He had warned His followers to look out for those prophets who work signs in His name (7:15,22). The point of this discourse is to guard against deception and terror—not to gratify curiosity.

Jesus will now outline the course of the present age leading up to the events of His return (4-14). Some commentators believe that He is merely giving signs that precede the fall of Jerusalem.

Matt. 24:5 For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will deceive many.

For many The first omen is that there will be false Messiahs. He predicts there will be many. Presumably they will not all come at once but rather over a long period of time.

Josephus informs us that this was the chief reason the people went to war against Rome (*War of the Jews* 6.54).

will come in my name, This means they will either come using the name of Jesus or that they will come assuming the Messianic office of Jesus.

saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ They will claim to be the genuine Messiah—the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Josephus tells us that there

were many false Messiah's in the first century (*War of the Jews* 2.259-63; 6.285-88; *Antiquities* 20. 97-98).

Scripture also testifies about such people: Theudas and Judas the Galilean (Acts 5:36,37) as well as the Egyptian who started a revolt (Acts 21:38).

The goal of the different Messianic movements was independence from the Romans. The leaders of these movements, having that aim in mind, came in the name of Christ whether or not they actually claimed His title.

and they will deceive many. As there will be many false Messiahs, so shall there be many people who follow them. For example, in A.D. 135 a man named Bar Kokhba claimed to be the Messiah and led a rebellion against Rome. His rebellion caused the expulsion of all remaining Jews from the Holy Land.

Jesus wanted His disciples to stay out of this rebellion against Rome. Though the majority of the people would be involved, this was not the fight of Christians. We have a different mandate from the Lord.

Matt. 24:6 For you are about to hear of wars and reports of wars; but see that you are not alarmed, for it must take place, but the end is not yet.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *it is necessary to take place*, some manuscripts read *all things must take place* or *these things must take place* or *all these things must take place*.

For you are about to hear of wars and reports of wars; Wars will occur as well as reports of them. This refers to actual war and wars that are threatened, wars both near and remote. The reference probably refers to wars in the Holy Land.

but see that you are not alarmed, This will not signal the end. Wars in the Holy Land or threats of war do not signal the end. Therefore do not be terrified or scared out of your wits.

for it must take place, These things are necessary before the end.

but the end is not yet. Commentators differ as to what "end" Jesus has in mind. Is it the destruction of the temple or the end of the age? If it refers to His Second Coming, it is important to note that the course of this present age will be characterized by wars and reports of war. Mankind will not rid himself of war until the coming of the Messiah.

Matt. 24:7 For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

Note on a variant reading: After earthquakes some manuscripts read *and pestilence*.

For nation will rise up against nation, War will not end until the Prince of Peace comes. This brings the issue of war beyond the Holy Land. Some see this referring to civil war among the Jews that lead to the destruction of the temple.

and kingdom against kingdom, Kingdoms are nations that are ruled by hereditary leaders.

and there will be famines Though Jesus was able to miraculously feed both Jews and Gentiles while He was here on earth, lack of food will prevail in some cases until He returns. These famines are probably not to be associated with the wars since they are linked with earthquakes.

and earthquakes in various places. Not only will there be wars, other terrible events will occur such as famines and earthquakes. Wars are man-made disasters while earthquake and famine are natural disasters. Still the end is not yet.

Matt. 24:8 All these things are the beginning of birth pangs.

All these things are the beginning of birth pangs. This is a Biblical way of describing distress. Some believe that this is Rabbinical idea that birth pangs will be associated the Messiah. The point is, when these things occur, the believers should not be alarmed, these events do not signal the end.

Matt. 24:9 Then they will deliver you over into tribulation, and they will kill you, and you will be hated by all the nations because of me.

Then This is not to be taken in the sense of chronological sequence here or in verse 10. It is during this period of trouble that these things will happen.

they will deliver you over into tribulation, This is the third sign—persecution of the believers. The apostles are to have their own tribulation (the same Greek word as 24:21 yet here without the word *great*). Those who follow Jesus are not promised an easy road. “The disciples were not to be mere spectators of the tragedy of the Jewish nation destroying itself. They were to be active the while, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, propagating the new faith” (Bruce , p. 290).

and they will kill you, Martyrdom for Christ is something that will continue until He returns. Luke qualifies the statement “some of you” (Luke 21:16).

and you will be hated For the idea of disciples of Jesus being hated see John 16:2.

by all the nations because of me. The disciples of Jesus should expect persecution to continue and to increase before He returns. Hatred will come from all the nations, not merely the Jews.

Matt. 24:10 And then many will be offended, and will betray one another, and will hate one another,

And then many will be offended, This refers to so-called disciples of Jesus. The Greek word translated “stumble” is *skandalizō* where we get our English word “scandal.” They will be “made to stumble” or possibly “stumble themselves.” The ones who are not genuine believers will be stumbled and stumble others.

and will betray one another, and will hate one another, Because of the persecution, many of the so-called believers will actually turn on the genuine believers (see parable of the seed hitting the rocky places 13:21).

Matt. 24:11 and many false prophets will arise and deceive many.

and many false prophets will arise and deceive many. As there will be many false Messiahs, so shall there be many false prophets. In this context the false prophets arise among the Christian community. They are given false presentations of the faith.

Matt. 24:12 And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold.

And because of the increase of lawlessness, The false prophets will encourage the people to be lawless. This is the sort of thing that we read about in Revelation 2 in the church of Thyatira. Jezebel was encouraging the people to practice lawlessness in the name of Christian freedom.

the love of many will grow cold. There will be a lack of love among the believers. Jesus said the world will know that we are His disciples by the love we have one for another (John 13:34,35). Paul told Timothy that in the last days people would love themselves more than they loved God (2 Timothy 3:2). “One of the sad features of a degenerate time is that even the good lose their fervor (Bruce, p. 291).

Matt. 24:13 But the one who endures until the end will be saved.

But the one who endures Love and endurance are two of the great virtues of the Christian. Endurance is an important theme with respect to future events (Daniel 12:12-13).

until the end will be saved. The context here is endurance in the face of tribulation and persecution and the promise of ultimate salvation is to those who endure.

Matt. 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached into all the world as a testimony unto all the nations, and then the end will come.

And this gospel of the kingdom This is the good news about the kingdom.

will be preached into all the world as a testimony unto all the nations, Before Christ can return, there must be a period of universal evangelism. That is not to say that the return of Christ is contingent upon our reaching every person on the earth (see Revelation 14:6) as though believers have the power to speed up or delay His coming. It means the gospel will be spread worldwide without any geographical or racial distinction. Though Paul had not yet reached Spain when he wrote Romans (Romans 10:18) he could say that his missionary work had gone out throughout all the earth.

and then the end will come. The unavoidable time of tribulation and persecution will have several effects: the commitment of many will grow cold; others will fall away and betray those whom they formerly stood with; and sin will increase. At the same time, however the period before the end will be marked by the proclamation of the good news that Jesus had been announcing in His ministry.

All the sufferings in verses 5-12 were experienced in the years prior to A.D. 70 and the fall of Jerusalem, and in varying degrees they have been signs experienced by the church down to the present time. These signs have characterized the age in which we live.

He wishes to impress on the disciples that the end will not be for a good while, therefore he emphasizes the among of preaching that can be done (Bruce p. 291).

The Specific Sign: The Abomination Of Desolation (24:15)

Jesus now gives them the one sign that will indicate the nearness of the end.

Matt. 24:15 Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place, the one reading let him understand,

Therefore, when This refers to what He has mentioned concerning the end. He has shown us what is not the sign of the end, now He will answer the disciple's question regarding the specific sign to look for.

you see the abomination of desolation, This is the sign of the end—the abomination of desolation. We could translate this in a variety of ways: “the abomination that causes desolation” “the horror which consists of desolation”

Bruce makes an important point with respect to the meaning of this phrase:

It must point to some broad, easily recognizable fact, which His followers could at once see and regard as a signal for flight; a fact not merely shocking religious feeling but threatening life (Bruce, p. 292).

As to the exact meaning of this phrase there have been many different suggestions:

1. The Roman army coming into the holy land. Once they came into the land all would know about it. The desolation is that which they would inevitably bring.
2. The attempt to put the statue of Caligula in the temple.
3. A technical phrase for the desecration of the temple which will be accomplished by the future Antichrist.

which was spoken by the prophet Daniel, Note that Jesus referred to Daniel as a prophet and the Pharisees hypocrites! This phrase is found in Daniel 9:27; 10:31; and 12:11. Mark, when describing this event, does not refer to Daniel.

standing in the holy place, This is a very specific reference. Those who believe this passage refers to the fall of Jerusalem understand the holy place to be the holy land or the banners of the Roman army that came into the temple when it was destroyed. The problem with the latter view is that by the time the Roman armies reached the temple, everyone was dead. It was much too late to flee. Scripture gives no specific example of the holy land referring to the “holy place.” It seems clear from Scripture that the holy place is a reference to the temple.

the one reading let him understand, These are probably the words of Matthew, rather than Jesus. The reader could refer to those Jews who read it and understand its meaning without divulging it to the Romans. A second possibility is that it refers to the reader of the Book of Daniel. More likely it refers to the person who is publicly reading the Scripture. The books of the New Testament were to be read publicly. 1 Timothy 4:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; Colossians 4:16; Revelation 1:3). In this case the reader would give an explanation to the people what was meant.

In 168 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes in an attempt to wipe out Judaism set up an image in the Holy of Holies. The exact same phrase was used of his act in 1 Maccabees 1:54; cf. too 2 Maccabees 8:17). Matthew refers to the statement of Daniel the prophet referring to this event (9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Therefore we are to look for the desecration of the temple as the sign that will mark the end of the age.

Therefore there is the necessity for the temple to be rebuilt and for sacrifices to be offered before this event can take place. 2 Thessalonians 2:2-4 gives us further information with respect to this event. The final Antichrist, will stand in the Holy of Holies in the temple in Jerusalem and claim to be God. He will remove any image that may have been their (the Ark of the Covenant?) and will replace it with an image of himself. He will cause the sacrifices to stop. This desecration of the temple will be the sign that begins the last three and one half years of the seventieth week of Daniel, or the Great Tribulation.

The Command To Leave (24:16-20)

The people are instructed to leave when they see this event.

Matt. 24:16 then let the ones in Judea flee unto the mountains.

then let the ones in Judea The reference to Judea suggests a Jewish setting. Judea spoke of those in Jerusalem and in its general vicinity.

flee unto the mountains. This event will trigger the great tribulation period. A time of terrible suffering is about to come. The mountains would be those outside of Judea, east of the Jordan.

The church historian Eusebius, *Against Heresies*, iii., 5, 3 tells us that many Jews did indeed flee the destruction of Jerusalem by going to Pella.

Matt. 24:17 And let no one upon the housetop, come down to take the things out of his house.

And let no one upon the housetop, The house tops in those days were flat.

come down to take the things out of his house. The urgency of leaving is stressed (cf. Genesis 19:17). Flight should be immediate. People could actually leave the city by jumping from one housetop to the next. This may have been Jesus' meaning. It is also possible that He was referring to the outside staircases that led up to the flat rooftops—one could go down from the top of the house without entering inside.

Matt. 24:18 And let no one in the field return to get his cloak.

And let no one in the field return to get his cloak. No time to retrieve possessions or clothing. A person usually slept in their cloak (outer garment) and wore it on cold mornings when working in the field. Once the day grew warmer they left it on the edge of the field. Jesus says there will be no time to get that cloak once the tribulation begins.

Matt. 24:19 Woe to the ones pregnant and to the ones nursing in those days!

Woe to the ones pregnant and to the ones nursing in those days! Pregnancy and nursing would impede quick travel. It would make the journey particularly difficult for these women. Since these cannot be avoided, the women are to be pitied. If this verse refers to the final Great Tribulation, rather than merely the fall of Jerusalem, then we learn that babies will be born during this time. In many ways, life will go on as usual until the Lord comes.

Matt. 24:20 And pray that your flight will not occur in winter or on the Sabbath.

And pray that your flight will not occur in winter In this context, winter means traveling in bad weather with cold nights.

or on the Sabbath. Since travel was limited on the Sabbath, fleeing on the Sabbath would make it obvious that you were leaving. For example,

animals could not be secured for travel on the Sabbath. The illustration is very Jewish.

The Great Tribulation (24:21-28)

Jesus will now speak of an unprecedented time of trouble.

Matt. 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, as such has not occurred from the beginning of the world until the present nor ever will be.

For then there will be great tribulation This is the reason for the urgency of the flight—Great Tribulation.

as such has not occurred from the beginning of the world With all the sufferings that humanity has experienced, none will be like this period of time.

until the present Nothing before has matched this horrific situation.

nor ever will be. To emphasize the horror of the situation we are told that no suffering before or after will ever been compared to it. This has been understood in three different ways:

- (1) Hyperbolic language referring to the destruction of Jerusalem and the horrible suffering that followed.
- (2) The literal judgment that will happen at the end of the age.
- (3) The destruction of Jerusalem is used as a type or foreshadowing of the last judgment.

Matt. 24:22 And unless those days are shortened, no flesh will be saved, but because of the elect, those days will be shortened.

And unless those days are shortened, The time must be cut short.

no flesh will be saved, If God did not intervene, no one would be preserved. Saved refers to physical safety.

but because of the elect, The elect is used elsewhere only in vss. 24,31 and 22:14. The reference could be either to Christians or to Israel as the elect or chosen people. The context of this passage as well as other references to the elect (see Romans 11:28) tend to favor the view that He is referring to Israel. The elect are those Jews who are selected for deliverance in the time of the Great Tribulation.

The apocryphal Book of Enoch begins: “The words of the blessing of Enoch, wherewith he blessed the elect and righteous who will be living in the day of tribulation wen all the wicked and godless are removed.”

those days will be shortened. Something has to intervene to stop the onslaught. Shortened is literally “cut off.” The tribulation will not go on indefinitely but will be stopped by God to keep the Jews from being annihilated and the world from destroying itself.

Matt. 24:23 Then if any one says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or, ‘There he is.’ Do not believe him.

Then if any one says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ These are erroneous reports of Christ’s coming. Someone claims to know His exact location.

or, ‘There he is.’ He is coming from somewhere.

Do not believe him. The warning not to believe in Messianic claims despite the great sufferings they are enduring including the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Jesus says do not even begin to believe these claims.

Matt. 24:24 For false Christ’s and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders so that to deceive, if possible, even the elect ones.

For false Christ’s Pseudo Christ’s will come on the scene. Jesus words have proven to be true as many false Christ’s have appeared and have led many astray.

and false prophets will appear False prophets are most likely those who proclaim that others are the Messiah. Bruce writes, “The demand would create the supply, men offering themselves as Saviors . . . with prophets preaching smooth things and assuring a despairing people of the deliverance at the last hour” (Bruce, p. 293). We find a similar example before the destruction of the first temple when Hananiah, the false prophet, was rebuked by Jeremiah for saying God would not destroy the temple.

and perform great signs and wonders The exact nature of the signs and wonders is not expressed. Are they true miracles or are they deceiving signs that claim to be miracles? Does Satan have the power to work miracles?

so that to deceive, The purpose is to deceive the chosen ones. See Deuteronomy 13:1 for God warning His people not merely to blindly follow those who offer signs.

if possible, The phrase suggests that it is not possible. Because they are in the care of their Father (cf. 10:29-31) it is not within their power to accomplish their purpose.

even the elect ones. Therefore the elect will not ultimately be deceived.

Interpreters who seek for exact historical fulfillments point to Simon son of Gioras and John of Giscala: the former the Messiah in the desert of Tekoah, gathering a confiding multitude about him; the latter the Messiah in the secret places, taking possession of the interior part of the temple with its belongings in the final struggle (Bruce, p. 294).

Matt. 24:25 Behold, I have told you beforehand.

Behold, This is emphatic. Note well!

I have told you beforehand. We have been warned therefore there is no excuse for being ignorant on this matter. The principle is clear: Believers are not to go after someone who claims to represent Christ merely because that person claims to have some miracle-working power. According to Jesus, false prophets will come on the scene attempting to deceive the elect. This remains true until our day.

Matt. 24:26 If, therefore, they say to you, ‘Behold, he is in the desert,’ do not go out, or, “Behold, he is in the inner rooms,” do not believe it

If, therefore, they say to you, ‘Behold, he is in the desert,’ do not go out, The desert would have been a likely place for the Messiah since it was where Moses, Israel’s first deliverer, came from. At the time of Jesus it was generally believed by the Jews that the Messiah would come from the desert. This is why we find all the excitement over John the Baptist when he was baptizing in the desert. It is also the reason they asked him if he were the Christ.

or, “Behold, he is in the inner rooms,” do not believe it. He is neither out publicly in the desert nor privately in the secret chambers. Both expressions point to non-visibility. “The false prophets bid the people to put their faith in a Messiah not in evidence” (Bruce, p. 294).

Matt. 24:27 For just as the lightning comes out from the east and flashes to the west, in this manner will the coming of the Son of Man be.

For just as the lightning comes out from the east and flashes to the west, In contrast to the false prophets, Messiah’s coming will be visible to all.

in this manner will the coming of the Son of Man be. His coming will be as unmistakable as lightning—self-evident (see Revelation 1:7).

Matt. 24:28 Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather together.

Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather together. Vultures gathering around those who have been killed is used in Scripture as an image of judgment (Luke 17:37, Ezekiel 39:17-20, Revelation 19:11-21).

This has caused some to feel that this difficult statement of Jesus has to do with judgment.

It seems, however, that this is a proverbial truth. Though some take this to refer to judgment, there is no reference to judgment in the immediate context. More likely, it speaks of the unmistakable character of His coming. As surely as you know that the vulture are there when an animal dies, so surely you will not be able to miss the Second Coming.

The Second Coming Of Christ (24:29-31)

Jesus now describes His literal Second Coming.

Matt. 24:29 And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heaven will be shaken.

And immediately after the tribulation of those days, Two major possibilities as to what “immediately after” means. The time after the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem or a yet future experience of great suffering just prior to the Second Coming. The context seems to point to the Second Coming.

Those that believe this tribulation refers to only the fall of Jerusalem have given various explanations as to how it concludes with Jesus’ return.

1. Jesus skips from the fall of Jerusalem to the next significant prophetic event—His return.
2. The entire period from the destruction of the temple until the Second Coming is the tribulation period.
3. The tribulation and the fall of Jerusalem prefigures and blends in to the final tribulation period.
4. The tribulation begins with events around the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 66-70) but the conclusion is postponed until the time of the end.
5. The return spoken of in the following verses is used symbolically for the fall of Jerusalem and not His Second Coming. Jesus would therefore come spiritually in A.D. 70.

the sun will be darkened, This is the prophetic language of the Old Testament (Isaiah 13:9; 34:4; Joel 3:15).

and the moon will not give its light; It is debated how literal we are to understand these words.

and the stars will fall from the sky, If taken literally this seems to be a collapse of the physical universe.

and the powers of the heaven will be shaken. Haggai (2:6) spoke of this type of shaking. Whether these things will literally happen or not, it points to great heavenly signs that will occur before Christ comes.

Matt. 24:30 And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see the sign of the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, The Son of Man is Jesus' reference to Himself. What exactly is the sign of the Son of Man is not directly stated. "The question what is this sign has greatly perplexed commentators who make . . . confessions of ignorance (Bruce, p. 295).

The sign of the Son of Man could simply refer to Jesus. This phrase could be translated "the sign which is the Son of Man." (a genitive of apposition in Greek).

and then all the tribes of the earth This refers to everyone on the earth, not just the Jews.

will mourn Will they mourn because they recognize Him coming as their Judge? Or is it because they recognize Him as their Savior, the One they rejected?

and they will see His coming will be visible.

the sign of the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of the sky, Revelation 1:7 tells us that He will return with clouds and that every eye will see Him.

with power and great glory. This is the Second Coming of Christ.

Matt. 24:31 And he will send his angels with a great trumpet, and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from the ends of heaven until the ends of the earth.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *with a great trumpet* some manuscripts read *with the sound of a great trumpet*.

And he will send his angels The angels are the messengers that will gather the elect. This is not the rapture of the church where the Lord Himself gathers His church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

with a great trumpet, Many have attributed this trumpet to the one in 1 Corinthians 15 "the last trumpet." However, the subject of 1 Corinthians 15 is the church, here it is Israel.

and they will gather together his elect This is not the rapture of the church but the gathering together of Israel. In this context the elect refers

to Israel, not the New Testament church. Unless this distinction is recognized much confusion will occur.

from the four winds, The four winds speak of every direction.

from the ends of heaven This is similar to phrases in Deuteronomy 30:4; and Psalm 19:7.

until the ends of the earth. At that time the dispersed remnant of Israel will be gathered from the four corners of the earth.

The Parable Of The Fig Tree (24:32-35)

Jesus illustrates this with the parable of the fig tree.

Matt. 24:32 Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.

Now learn the parable from the fig tree: The parable of the fig tree seems to be a simple parable from nature. The kind of tree chosen will teach us a lesson about His return.

when its branch has already become tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. When the fig tree begins to sprout leaves, one knows that summer is near. Tender branches and young leaves are a sure sign of summer. In the same way, when certain events take place, one may know that the end is near. Just as the sprouting of the fig tree indicates summer is near but not yet present, so the coming of the Son of Man is near but not yet present when these events take place.

The fig tree is often viewed as representative of Israel. When Israel begins to show signs of national life then you know the end is near. The problem with this view is:

(1) Identifying Israel with the fig tree. There is no specific Old Testament reference that identifies Israel with the fig tree.

(2) The parallel passage in Luke when it says “Behold the fig tree and *all the trees.*”

Matt. 24:33 In the same manner even you, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the doors.

In the same manner even you, As is true with the fig tree so shall it be true of Jesus’ coming.

when you see all these things, What are these things? Are they the signs in 4-14 or 15-21 or is it the signs associated with the Second Coming itself?

you know that it is near, right at the doors. When these things come to pass, then you can know that the end is at hand.

Matt. 24:34 For truly I say to you, that this generation will not pass until all these things be fulfilled.

For truly I say to you, that this generation will not pass What did Jesus mean by the phrase “this generation?” The problem can be simply stated: the generation that was alive when Jesus spoke these words have all passed away, yet events described did not take place. How then do we understand what He meant? As for the interpretation of the meaning of “this generation” there are the following possibilities.

1. Liberal theologians, as well as some others, have understood that Jesus expected to return before the Fall of Jerusalem. He believed that His coming again in power would be within a generation. This view would have Him making an incorrect statement. Since He admitted that He did not know the time of His coming, this erroneous statement can be attributed to the self-imposed limitation of His knowledge.

The problems of holding a view like this are enormous.

First, this is not the only possible way in which we can interpret His statement. As we will observe, there are a variety of different ways we can understand His statement.

Second, it involves a misunderstanding of what Jesus meant when He said that neither the Son knew the day or the hour (vs. 36). If the limitation of Jesus’ knowledge is understood as referring to the general time of his return rather than the actual day and time of His return, then why would He contradict himself with the analogy of the budding fig tree?

Third, by other statements in Matthew’s gospel, we see that Jesus indicated that He planned to be away for a long period of time before coming again.

2. The generation that heard His words would see the fall of Jerusalem. This would make this statement and entire the Olivet discourse refer only to the fall of Jerusalem. His coming therefore would not be a literal coming when Jerusalem fell but rather He would come figuratively in power with the destruction of the city. The problem with this view is that many verses in this discourse have to do with His Second Coming, not merely the Fall of Jerusalem.

3. The generation refers to generation alive at the time of His Second coming. Those who saw the signs of the end (i.e. the abomination of desolation) would also be alive when He returned. In other words, it would be a short period of time from the abomination of desolation until the Second Coming.

4. The term refers to the people of God (Israel) will not pass from the scene until all these things be fulfilled. This generation therefore would mean “this race.” It would be another indication that the Jews, as a nation, would continue to exist until Christ comes despite the great persecution and tribulation which they are about to receive.

5. This expression in Matthew clearly alludes to a sinful generation, one ripe for judgment (12:39, 45; 16:4; 23: 36). If this is what Jesus is referring to, then it could fit either the fall of Jerusalem or the end of the age or be referring to both.

6. In the Old Testament, the term refers to a believing group of people.

7. The generation refers to the generation that sees Israel return to their land after a long period of exile. This goes hand in hand with understanding that the parable of the fig tree refer to the regathering of the nation Israel to a modern state. The generation that sees that happen will be the generation that witnesses the return of Christ.

8. There is also the possibility that this prediction is capable of multiple fulfillment. Therefore Jesus had both the fall of Jerusalem (happening within a generation) and the events prior to His Second Coming. His generation would see the fall of Jerusalem. In like manner, the events will be similar when He comes again.

until all these things be fulfilled. All these things must have the same meaning as the previous verse. All the events around either the fall of Jerusalem or His Second Coming.

Matt. 24:35 The heaven and the earth will pass away, but my words will never ever pass away.

The heaven and the earth will pass away, but my words will never ever pass away. This is the strongest way in which someone could make a solemn statement in Greek. We could translate it, "There is no way ever, ever, ever, for My words to pass away." The words which He has referred to are the not merely the words in this context, but His words as a whole. His message will never pass away.

This is quite a claim! Can you imagine the possibility of this coming to pass given the time, place, and circumstances in which Jesus made the statement, yet it has come to pass.

The Command To Be Ready (24:36-44)

Jesus now instructs His disciples to be prepared for His coming. In doing so He gives us three illustrations. In the first parable (the days of Noah, 37-41) His coming is totally unexpected. In the second parable (the good and evil slaves, 45-51) His coming is sooner than expected. In the parable about the 10 virgins (25:1-13) His coming is later than expected.

Matt. 24:36 But as for that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the phrase *neither the Son*.

But as for that day and hour, This refers to the exact time of His coming. It is not referring to the general time period but rather the specific day and hour.

no one knows, There is no human being who knows.

not even the angels of heaven, Though the angels are the ones who will gather the elect, they do not know when He is coming.

nor the Son, In contrast to verse 33 of what can be known—namely, the signs that we are to look for prior to His coming, Jesus confesses that at this time, He does not know the precise day and the hour of His coming.

but only the Father. The explanation of His lack of knowledge is found in the kenosis doctrine of Philippians 2:6-8 where Christ emptied Himself of certain independent use of His divine attributes while here on earth. The time of the coming of the Son of Man is the Father's alone (Acts 1:7). This is in keeping with the Old Testament idea "there will be one day, and that day is known to the Lord" (Zechariah 14:7 LXX). The signs of the end can be known with certainty, however the time of the end is unknown to everyone except the Father. What counts is the fact that the Son of Man will return.

Again we must stress the difference between the nature of Christ (as God) and His position when He was here on earth (as a man). In His humanity there was self-imposed limitations. After His resurrection and Ascension into heaven, those limitations have been removed. Revelation 1:1 tells us that He now knows these things.

Matt. 24:37 For just as in the days of Noah, so will it be with the coming of the Son of Man.

For just as in the days of Noah, The comparison now is to the time of Noah—not Noah himself.

so will it be with the coming of the Son of Man. There will be parallels between Noah's days and the days before Jesus comes.

Matt. 24:38 For as they were in those days before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the ark.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *those* before the word *days*.

For as they were in those days before the flood, He will now list the parallels. Note again the parallel is not to Noah, but to those living in Noah's day. Therefore the parallel is to those who are to be judged—not the ones saved.

eating and drinking, This does not necessarily have the idea of indulgence. Some have argued that the term translated *eating* actually refers

to gluttony because the Greek word is often used of beasts eating. However since word also is used for humans eating (John 6:58; 13:18) no sinister idea should necessarily be seen. The main idea is that all things are going on as if nothing is going to happen.

marrying and giving in marriage, Men are the ones who marry, women are given in marriage. The people assume life will continue indefinitely.

until the day Noah entered into the ark. Business as usual until the flood hit. They did not believe the preaching of Noah, neither will they believe the preaching about the end.

Matt. 24:39 And they knew nothing until the flood came and took them all away, so will it be with the coming of the Son of Man.

And they knew nothing Again it is the unbelievers who are this illustration. They were not looking for this judgment to occur, rather they were ridiculing those who spoke about it.

until the flood came and took them all away, The people were not convinced until the flood came and removed them from the scene.

It seems that at least as far as humanity is concerned, the flood was universal—it took them all away. This and other biblical passages seem to teach that the flood in Noah's day took away all but eight people—the remainder perishing in the flood.

so will it be with the coming of the Son of Man. As the people of Noah's day were unaware of the impending doom, the same is true for the generation that will see the Second Coming of Christ. This emphasizes the suddenness of Christ's coming.

Matt. 24:40 Then two men will be in the field, one will be taken and one will be left.

Then two men will be in the field, People will be working side by side when this judgment comes.

one will be taken and one will be left. As with the time of Noah, there will be a division of humanity. Just who will take them is not stated—whether it be the angels or the Son of Man.

Matt. 24:41 Two women will be grinding at the mill, one will be taken and the other one left.

Two women will be grinding at the mill, We now have the illustration of two women working next to each other. The reference is to a handmill, which required two to work at it. Grinding took a considerable time and in that culture it was considered woman's work.

one will be taken and the other one left. Another illustration of people working side by side where one goes and the other stays. Those who are taken can refer to those taken in judgment or those taken by the Son of

Man when He comes with His angels. It seems better to refer to them to be taken in judgment because the comparison is with those unbelievers in Noah's time who were judged, not those who went into the ark.

The application of these verses is made clear in the exhortation of the following verse.

Matt. 24:42 Therefore, be watching, because your Lord is coming at such a day that you do not know.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *day* some manuscripts read *hour*.

Therefore, Because of all these things He has told His disciples.

be watching, The importance of being ready at any time is now stressed. The followers of Christ should be in constant readiness. Watching includes an active dimension of righteous conduct.

because your Lord is coming Notice it is "your Lord" who is coming. He is the Lord of all.

at such a day that you do not know. This means "of what sort of day,"—whether it be early or late.

Matt. 24:43 But know this thing: that if the owner of the house had known at what night watch the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

But know this thing: Here is one thing you should know.

that if the owner of the house Concerning the owner of the house Bruce notes, "[it] suggests the idea of a great man, but in reality is a poor peasant who is in view. He lives in a clay house which can be dug through (sun-dried bricks) Yet he is the master in his humble dwelling (Bruce, p. 298).

had known at what night watch The night was divided into various watches.

the thief was coming, It is the business of the thief to know when the people are not at home. He keeps people in the dark with respect to the time of his coming.

he would have kept watch The problem with thieves is we do not know when they are coming or even if they are coming at all.

and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. A simple analogy is drawn between the coming of Christ and a man whose house is broken into. Since Christians cannot know the time of His coming we must constantly watch. As the thief comes unexpectedly, so will Christ.

Matt. 24:44 So, you also must be prepared, because the Son of Man will come in an hour when you do not expect.

So, you also must be prepared, In the same manner, as the precautions are made for the thief.

because the Son of Man will come in an hour when you do not expect. The reason we are to be ready is because He will come at an unexpected time.

The Parable Of The Faithful And Unfaithful Servant (24:45-51)

Jesus illustrates the importance of vigilance with two parables.

Matt. 24:45 “Who then is the faithful and wise slave, whom the master appoints over his household servants and gives them food in the proper time?

“Who then is the faithful and wise slave, Jesus now asks the question about the identity of this servant.

whom the master appoints over his household servants The master would appoint one of his slaves over his household.

and gives them food in the proper time? The faithful slave is one who rightly uses that which His Father has given him.

Matt. 24:46 And blessed is that servant whom, when his master comes, he will find doing in this manner.

And blessed is that servant whom, when his master comes, The Lord will now tell us who is the blessed servant. He is the one not demoralized by the delay of the return of His master.

he will find doing in this manner. He is the one doing the will of God when our Lord comes despite the delay. Again, there is the inference in this parable of a long delay between Jesus’ first and second coming.

Matt. 24:47 For truly I say to you, that he will place him over all his possessions.

For truly I say to you, that he will place him over all his possessions. He will receive a reward for his faithfulness. In the same manner, believers will be rewarded for their faithfulness (1 Corinthians 3).

Matt. 24:48 But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’

And if that evil slave This is not the same individual just spoken of but a man placed at the same post. The evil slave is not someone who was once good but who became evil as some have erroneously taught. The word translated “evil” simply means bad or corrupt.

says in his heart, This is an expression that means “says to himself.”

my master is delaying his coming, In this parable, the slave thinks the Lord is coming later than expected. In the previous illustration they did not believe the master was coming at all. He is now demoralized because his master has not returned. Bruce writes: “The delay had been so long that the unworthy servant goes on his bad way as if the master would never come at all (Bruce, p. 298).

Again, this emphasizes that the time between when the master had left and when he is returning is considerable.

Matt. 24:49 and he will begin to beat his fellow slaves, and eat and drink with the drunkards,

and he will begin to beat his fellow slaves, He takes advantage of the master’s delay by acting irresponsibly.

and eat and drink with the drunkards, Rather than providing the needs for his fellow servants he violates his master’s command.

Matt. 24:50 the master of that slave will come in a day when he is not prepared, and in an hour which he does not know.

the master of that slave will come in a day when he is not prepared, This slave is not expecting his master to come so soon

and in an hour which he does not know. Matthew returns to the theme of the unexpected coming of the master. The time remains unknown and should be a motivation for godly living.

Matt. 24:51 And he will cut him into pieces and assign his part with the hypocrites, where there will be the crying and the grinding of teeth.

And he will cut him into pieces This mean to cut into pieces with a saw—which was an actual form of punishment in ancient times. There is a question as to how literal we are to understand this. Bruce remarks on the literal understanding of the phrase, “But this can hardly be, especially as in the following clause the man is supposed to be still alive” (Bruce, p. 298). Some see it as a mere beating or thrashing with the whip.

and assign his part with the hypocrites, The hypocrites is where this hypocrite belongs. For Matthew there is no worse group than the hypocrites (cf. 6:2-18; 15:7; and especially ch. 23), and the wicked servant of this parable was, if anything, a hypocrite.

where there will be the crying The final destination for hypocrites will be the place of the judgment of the wicked.

and the grinding of teeth. Matthew has used this term before for judgment.

Summary to Chapter 24

Jesus gives His last of five discourses—the one covering the events of His return. The background is His statement at the end of 23 with reference to the desolation of the temple. His disciples showed Him the temple and its magnificence, possibly thinking that the destruction He predicted was only symbolic. However as they would find out in the coming years, the destruction did actually occur.

The interpretation of this chapter is difficult because there are two events that are in view—the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as well as the Second Coming of Christ. Just exactly which passages refer to which of these events has long been a source of contention among commentators. In our explanation of this chapter we have tried to fairly represent all views that Bible believers hold.

**Matthew
Chapter 25**

Chapter 25 continues the parables of Jesus—the story about the ten virgins and the evil slave.

The Parable Of The Ten Virgins (25:1-13)

Jesus further illustrates the need to be ready with the parable of the ten virgins or bridesmaids who are going out to meet the bride. In this parable it is the bridesmaids, not the bride herself, that is the focus of this parable.

Matt. 25:1 Then the kingdom of heaven will be compared to ten virgins, who took their own lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *and the bride* after *the bridegroom*.

Then the kingdom of heaven will be compared to This introductory formula is similar to 13:24; 18:23; 22:2 but here it is spoken of in the future tense.

ten virgins, The kingdom is compared to the story about ten “virgins” or “bridesmaids.” The word translated virgins is used in the general sense of unmarried maidens attending the bride. We should *not* press the term to find any other meaning (such as mature believers as opposed to carnal believers, those who are celibate, etc.). Neither should we attach any special meaning to the number ten. There does not seem to be any specific reason for this number. The analogy also breaks down when comparing the bridegroom to the character of God. As we saw with Jesus own interpretation of His parables (ch. 13) it was only the main details that had meaning.

who took their own lamps, They were apparently oil lamps attached to poles or torches, not the small hand-held lamps.

and went out to meet This was the actual historical practice. The members from the party of the bride would meet the members from the party of the groom. These processions, accompanied by much singing and dancing, were generally held at night. Hence the need for the lamps or torches.

the bridegroom. The groom would have his own procession with his male friends. Jesus has already been identified as the bridegroom in another parable in Matthew (9:15). Note that the bride is not mentioned, it is her attendants that are the focus of the parable, the groom is mentioned his attendants are not.

Matt. 25:2 And five of them were foolish, and five were wise.

And five of them were foolish, The foolish ones are mentioned first because they are the focus of the parable.

and five were wise. This does not mean that half of the people will be saved and the other half will not.

Matt. 25:3 For when the foolish ones took their lamps, they did not take oil with them.

Note on a variant reading: A small number of manuscripts have *in their flasks* after *them*.

For when the foolish ones took their lamps, they did not take oil with them. The foolish ones did not take oil in their flasks. This could refer to either extra oil or no oil whatsoever. Whatever the case, they did not have the foresight to be prepared in case of a delay of the bridegroom. It is probably not wise to place some symbolic value on the oil (i.e. good works, the Holy Spirit, etc.).

Matt. 25:4 But the wise ones took oil in the flasks along with their own lamps.

But the wise ones took oil in the flasks The wise ones took extra oil, anticipating the delay of the bridegroom.

along with their own lamps. They would not be caught unprepared.

Matt. 25:5 And when the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and began to sleep.

And when the bridegroom was delayed, In the traditional weddings, it would be possible for the messengers to repeatedly announce the coming of the groom, yet there could be a delay of hours. The delay of the bridegroom in the parable is linked to the uncertainty concerning the time of the return of the Son of Man (see also verse 19, “after a long time). The inference, therefore, is that mankind will wait for a long time before the return of the Lord.

they all became drowsy and began to sleep. The hours wore on as the bridegroom was delayed and all of them began to nod off. There is no fault attached to them for sleeping. Their preparedness was seen in the extra oil they brought for the possible delay.

Matt. 25:6 But in the middle of the night, there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

Note on variant readings: A few manuscripts have *rise up* instead of *come out*. Some manuscripts do not have *him* after *meet*.

But in the middle of the night, there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom!’ This signifies the bridegroom is coming.

Come out to meet him! Several hours had passed, apparently enough time for the lamps to become low.

Matt. 25:7 Then all the virgins arose and trimmed their own lamps.

Then all the virgins arose The loud cry caught the attention of everyone.

and trimmed their own lamps. They cleaned and oiled their torches so that they would burn brightly. The word translated “trimmed” means put in order. It is the Greek word *kosmeo* where we get our English word cosmetics.

Matt. 25:8 And the foolish ones said to the wise ones, ‘Give to us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’

And the foolish ones said to the wise ones, ‘Give to us some of your oil,

for our lamps are going out.’ The foolish ones were not prepared and they now notice they their lamps are becoming dim. The image of the lamps of the wicked going out is used in Proverbs 13:9 and Job 18:5 and may lie behind the imagery of the parable at this point.

Matt. 25:9 But the wise ones answered and said, ‘No! There would by no means be enough for you and us; go instead to the ones selling and buy for yourselves.’

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the strong negative *by no means*. Rather they have the simple and softer negative *not*.

But the wise ones answered and said, ‘No! There would by no means be enough for you and us; The wise virgins do not comply with their request to share their oil (from their reserve flasks).

go instead to the ones selling They are to get their oil elsewhere.

and buy for yourselves.’ Instead they direct them to go and buy some more for themselves. Buying oil late at night likely would not have been difficult, even in a little village in full celebration of a wedding.

The fact that they were told to go out and buy the oil seems to indicate that oil is not symbolic of the Holy Spirit or of good works. We cannot buy the Holy Spirit neither can we be saved by our good works.

Matt. 25:10 And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and the virgins who were prepared entered with him into the wedding banquet, and the door was shut.

And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, The foolish ones were caught unprepared.

and the virgins who were prepared entered with him into the wedding banquet, At the coming of the bridegroom to the wedding banquet (the coming of Christ) it is the “prepared ones” who go into the feast. The term “wedding banquet” has already been used with Messianic associations in 22:1-14.

and the door was shut. The shut door points to the time when it is too late to alter the division between the saved and the lost (cf. Isaiah 22:22; Luke 13:25; Revelation 3:7). It also reminds us of God shutting the door to Noah’s ark (Genesis 6).

Matt. 25:11 And later the remaining virgins also came, saying, ‘Sir, sir, open it up for us!’

And later the remaining virgins also came, The foolish ones arrive, presumably with a fresh supply of oil, only to find a locked door.

saying, ‘Sir, sir, open it up for us!’ Their cry becomes the same thing as the “Lord, Lord” of 7:21-22. After the coming of the Son of Man, it is too late for the knocking to which the door will open (cf. 7:7-8).

Matt. 25:12 But he answered and said, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’

But he answered and said, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ There are no last-minute conversions here. Instead, they hear the dreaded words that He does not know them. The foolish virgins, by being unprepared for the coming of the bridegroom with its unanticipated delay, are shut out from enjoying the wedding banquet and no appeal can change that reality.

Matt. 25:13 Therefore, be watching, because you do not know neither the day or the hour.

Note on a variant reading: After *nor the hour* some manuscripts read *in which the Son of Man is coming*.

Therefore, be watching, because you do not know neither the day or the hour. The final exhortation indicates the main point of the parable—one is to watch. The point is not the avoidance of literal sleep (the wise virgins did sleep) but spiritual wakefulness, that is, keeping in a state of constant readiness for the coming of the Son of Man. The vigilance is required because the day and the hour cannot be known in advance.

We can learn the following lessons from this parable:

1. There will be a long period of time between the First and Second Coming of Christ (25:5; see also 24:9; 25:19).
2. Each one of us must be personally prepared for the coming of the Lord (25:7-9). We cannot expect the preparedness of those close to us to

compensate for our lack of preparedness (see also Psalm 49:7; Proverbs 9:12).

3. Because we do not know the time of His coming we must always be prepared (25:13; Psalms 95:7,8; 2 Corinthians 6:2).

4. Those who profess belief in Jesus are similar, in many respects, to those who truly believe (see the parable of the Sower in chapter 13).

5. There will be no doubt when Christ returns (25:6). It will be visible to everyone (24:31; Revelation 1:7).

6. When the Lord returns, there will be no second chance for those who have not received Him (25:10-12). This is an important theme in the New Testament (see also 7:22,23; 10:32,33; 24:37-42; 25:34-36; 2 Corinthians 5:9,10; Galatians 6:7,8; 2 Thessalonians 1:8,9; Hebrews 9:27).

The Parable of The Talents (25:14-30)

Next Jesus gives the parable of the talents.

Matt. 25:14 For it is like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.

For it is like There is no specific subject mentioned. This could refer to the “kingdom of heaven is like” or simply “this situation is like”

a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. The underlying theme of this parable is the absence of the master (the Son of Man) and the interim responsibility of the servants. He calls His servants together and puts them in charge of his possessions. This is a parable related to the commissioning in 24:45. Here the responsibility is in terms of money.

Matt. 25:15 And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, to each according to his own ability, and he went on his journey.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *he went away on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went out* some manuscripts read *and he went on his journey immediately*. The next sentence starts with *The one who had received the five talents*.

And to one he gave five talents, The talent was a large amount of money, probably silver coinage. Our English word *talent* meaning “ability” is derived from this term.

to another, two, and to another, one, The issue is not the amount of money given to each but what each did with that which was given to him.

to each according to his own ability, Since the amounts are different it probably refers to personal gifts and abilities rather than the gospel itself.

The key is that we are to be faithful with the gifts God has given us (1 Corinthians 4:2; Luke 12:48).

and he went on his journey. This represents the period of time between His ascension and return.

Matt. 25:16 Immediately, the one who had received the five talents went out and worked with them, and gained another five.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *gained* some manuscripts read *made*. After *another five* some manuscripts read *talents*.

Immediately, the one who had received the five talents went out and worked with them, The man went to work immediately.

and gained another five. The parable does not describe how the man doubled that which was given to him, because it is unimportant. It is important the he made good and effective use of what was given to him.

Matt. 25:17 So also, the one with the two talents gained another two.

So also, the one with the two talents gained another two. The same is true of the second servant who doubled the talents given to him.

Matt. 25:18 But the man who had received the one talent went away, dug into the ground, and hid the master's money.

But the man who had received the one talent went away, dug into the ground, and hid the master's money. By contrast the third servant hid the money in the ground to preserve it.

Matt. 25:19 Now after a long time the master of the slaves returned and settled the accounts with them.

Now after a long time The master gave the slaves a lot of time to use the money. It also reflects the lengthy time before the Second Coming (see verse 5).

the master of the slaves returned and settled the accounts with them. The idea of settling accounts refers to judgment.

Matt. 25:20 And the man that had received five talents came and brought him another five talents saying, 'Master, You entrusted me with five talents, behold, I have gained another five talents.'

Note on a variant reading: After *I have gained* some manuscripts have *in addition to them*.

And the man that had received five talents came and brought him another five talents saying, 'Master, You entrusted me with five talents, behold, I have gained another five talents.' The first slave "gained" or "earned" another five talents.

Matt. 25:21 And his master said, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave! You were faithful over a few things, I will put you charge over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.’

Note on a variant reading: Before *you were faithful* a few manuscripts read *since*.

And his master said, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave; The good slave is commended.

You were faithful over a few things, I will put you charge over many things. This echoes the policy stated in 24:45-47.

Enter into the joy of your master.’ Refers to the final joy of the believer.

Matt. 25:22 And the man with the two talents came and said, ‘Master, you entrusted me with two talents, behold, I have gained another two talents.’

Note on variant readings: Instead of *with the two talents* some manuscripts read *having received the two talents*. After *I have gained* some manuscripts read *in addition to them*.

And the man with the two talents came and said, ‘Master, you entrusted me with two talents, Though he was given less than the first slave, he also doubled the amount of talents.

behold, I have gained another two talents.’ This is word for word what the first slave said except for the number of talents he earned.

Matt. 25:23 And his master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave, you were faithful over a few things, you will be put in charge over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.’

Note on a variant reading: Before *you were faithful* a few manuscripts read *since*.

And his master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave, you were faithful over a few things, you will be put in charge over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.’ This is word for word what was said to the first slave.

Matt. 25:24 And the man who had received one talent came to him and said, ‘Master, I knew that you are a harsh man, harvesting where you had not sown, and gathering where you did not scatter seed.

And the man who had received one talent We now come to the last man who is the object lesson of this parable.

came to him and said, ‘Master, I knew that you are a harsh man, Unlike the first two slaves, the third one does not give an account of what he has earned but rather begins by justifying what he did with his one talent.

harvesting where you had not sown, This means letting others do the work for him.

and gathering where you did not scatter seed. This seems to be two different ways of stating the same thing. Others were doing the work for him.

Matt. 25:25 And because I was afraid, I went away and hid your talent in the ground; behold, you have that which is yours.'

And because I was afraid, I went away and hid your talent in the ground; behold, you have that which is yours.' Fear was the motivation for this man not increasing the master's wealth. This man did nothing with his life.

Matt. 25:26 But his master answered and said to him, 'Evil and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I harvest where I have not sown, and I gather from where I did not scatter seed?

But his master answered and said to him, 'Evil and lazy slave! The word "evil" is a different Greek word than in verse 30.

You knew, did you, that I harvest where I have not sown, The master is not necessarily agreeing with the assessment of him by the slave. The language could be sarcastic.

and I gather from where I did not scatter seed? The man's guilt is greater because he knew the master expected a profit.

Matt. 25:27 Then it was necessary, was it not, for you to put my money with the bankers, so when I returned I could receive that which was mine with interest.

Then it was necessary, was it not, for you to put my money with the bankers, so when I returned I could receive that which was mine with interest. Knowing that his master expected a profit, the least he could have done is put it in the bank to gain interest.

Matt. 25:28 Therefore, take the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.

Note on a variant reading: One ancient manuscript has *five* instead of *ten*.

Therefore, take the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents. This is the beginning of his judgment.

Matt. 25:29 And everyone who has will be given more, and it will be increased; but whoever does not have, even that which he has will be taken from him.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *even that which he has* some manuscripts read *he seems to have*. Some manuscripts have at the end of the verse *The one who has ears to hear, let him hear*

And everyone who has will be given more, and it will be increased; but whoever does not have, even that which he has will be taken from him. Here is the principle that is set down.

Matt. 25:30 And throw out that worthless slave into the outer darkness, where there will be the crying and the grinding of teeth.

And throw out that worthless slave into the outer darkness, where there will be the crying and the grinding of teeth. The evil slave is placed with those who are lost. He did not further the interests of his master. The idea behind the parable is that not everyone is entrusted with the same amount, but one must be faithful to that which he has been given.

The following lessons can be learned from this parable:

1. Jesus did not expect to return immediately. From this parable we learn that a long time will elapse before He comes again (25:18,26,41-45; James 4:17).
2. Believers should do everything with the view that there will be a day of judgment. For the believer the judgment will be the receiving of rewards, not condemnation (Romans 8:1). Therefore, all of our actions should be done in light of a day of reckoning (25:19,25-35; Luke 12:47; Romans 2:16; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:13).
3. On this earth we all have important responsibilities, however, their importance should be seen in light of eternity (25:21,23).
4. God gives us opportunities to serve Him based upon the ability He has given us. But all people have not been given the same abilities. Since all of us will not have the same opportunities, each of us will be judged based upon our faithfulness with the specific opportunities that we have. The key issue is, "Have we been faithful to the use the gifts, abilities, and opportunities that God has given us?" (see 7:24-27; 25:15,16,19-23).
5. Any abilities or gifts that we have ultimately belong to God. We are not our own, we are His property. Therefore we are to be good managers with the abilities that He has given us (25:14; Luke 16:2; 1 Corinthians 4:1,2; 6:19,20; 1 Peter 4:10).
6. Sin consists of not only doing wrong things such as murder, adultery, pride, and stealing, it also consists of not doing good things. Sins of omission are just as wrong as sins of commission (25:18,26,41-45, James 4:17).
7. In the afterlife, believers will share in the Lord's joy (25:21,23; Ephesians 3:15; 2 Timothy 4:8).

8. The evil and lazy person will not be faithful to the gifts that God has given him. When confronted with his sin he will make excuses rather than confessing his wrongs (7:22,23; 25:24-30,44,45; Luke 13:26,27). However no excuse will be accepted.

The Judgment Of The Sheep And The Goats (25:31-46)

Jesus now explains what will happen at the judgment of the nations.

Matt. 25:31 But when the Son of Man comes in his glory and all his angels with him, then he will sit upon His glorious throne.

But when the Son of Man comes in his glory and all his angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. We now consider the judgment of the nations which occurs at the Second Coming. As in the other references to His coming, the *fact* of His coming, rather than the exact time of His coming, is what is stressed.

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *holy angels* instead of *angels*.

Matt. 25:32 And all the nations will be gathered together before him; and he will separate them from one another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

And all the nations will be gathered together before him; and he will separate them Though it speaks of the nations gathering together it is individuals that are judged. The word translated them in Greek is in a different gender (masculine) than the word referring to nations (neuter).

from one another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. The shepherd separating the sheep from the goats would be a very common sight among those people.

Matt. 25:33 And he will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

And he will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. The right hand is the place of honor while the left hand is the place of dishonor.

Matt. 25:34 Then the King will say to the ones on his right, ‘Come, those blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’

Then the King will say to the ones on his right, ‘Come, those blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ The ones on His right hand inherit the kingdom.

Matt. 25:35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, and I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took me in,

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, There are six different situations of need that the righteous met.

and I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took me in,

Matt. 25:36 and I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.

and I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. More needs.

Matt. 25:37 Then the righteous ones will answer him, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you to drink?”

Then the righteous ones will answer him, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you to drink? The righteous people are surprised, they do not ever remember doing these things to Jesus.

Matt. 25:38 And when did we see you as a stranger and invite you in, or naked and clothe you?

And when did we see you as a stranger and invite you in, or naked and clothe you? They remember none of these events.

Matt. 25:39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?

And when did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? They never saw him sick.

Matt. 25:40 And the king will say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, for as much as you did it for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.’

Note on a variant reading: A few early manuscripts do not have the words *of mine*.

And the king will say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, for as much as you did it for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.’ The least of my brothers refers to believers in Christ.

Matt. 25:41 Then he will say to the ones on his left, ‘Depart from me, cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *cursed ones* many manuscripts read *the cursed ones*.

Instead of *prepared* a few manuscripts read *which My Father prepared*.

Then he will say to the ones on his left, 'Depart from me, cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. The place of judgment was not prepared for humankind, but rather for the devil and his angels.

Matt. 25:42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink.

Note on a variant reading: A few early manuscripts read *and* before *I was thirsty*.

For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. The opposite response of the righteous.

Matt. 25:43 And I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, naked, and you did not clothe me, and I was sick and in prison and you did not visit me.

Note on variant readings: One early papyrus manuscript along with one other manuscript has *and* before *naked*. One early papyrus manuscript along with a couple of others have *I was* after *naked*.

And I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, naked, and you did not clothe me, and I was sick and in prison and you did not visit me. When did they reject Him?

Matt. 25:44 Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungering or thirsting or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and we did not minister to you?'

Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungering or thirsting or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and we did not minister to you?' They protest because they do not believe they have ever personally rejected Jesus.

Matt. 25:45 Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, because you did not do this for one of the least of my brothers, you did not do it to me.'

Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, because you did not do this for one of the least of my brothers, you did not do it to me.' They rejected those who brought the message of Jesus.

Matt. 25:46 Then they will go away to everlasting punishment, but the righteous to everlasting life.

Note on a variant reading: One Latin manuscript reads *eternal fire* instead of *eternal punishment*.

Then they will go away to everlasting punishment, The punishment for those who do not believe in Jesus is everlasting.

but the righteous to everlasting life. Both the life and the punishment are eternal. No idea of conditional immortality can be found in this verse.

This judgment is not teaching salvation by works. The works are symbolic of a deeper reality, the acceptance of the message of Jesus (see James 2:14ff.).

Summary to Chapter 25

Jesus continues His parables by urging the people to be ready for His Second Coming. He gives the parable of ten maidens, five who were prepared for the bridegrooms return and five who were not. The ones who were not prepared were not allowed into the wedding banquet.

He then gave the parable of the three slaves. Two of which doubled their talents. The third slave buried the talent of the master and was judged accordingly.

Jesus speaks about a final judgment of the nations where the people are separated as sheep are from goats. The sheep enter into His eternal kingdom while the goats are sent away to judgment. Those who do not enter into the kingdom are sent away to everlasting punishment.

**Matthew
Chapter 26**

Jesus predicts His death at the same time the religious leaders are plotting to kill Him. An unnamed woman in Bethany anoints Jesus body for burial.

Jesus' Prediction Of His Death During The Passover (26:1,2)

Jesus now specifies when He will die—during the Feast of the Passover.

Matt. 26:1 And it came about when Jesus finished all these words, he said to his disciples,

And it came about when Jesus finished all these words, he said to his disciples, Matthew ends this discourse, the last of the five, with the same formula he uses to end the others (cf. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1). Here “all” occurs for the first time, probably referring to the sayings in chapters 24–25. It is also possible that this refers to the end of Jesus’ teaching, the last of the great public discourses.

Matt. 26:2 “You know that after two days is the Passover—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

“You know This may be a command to understand what is going to occur, rather than just an announcement of something they are already aware of.

that after two days is the Passover— The Passover fell on 15 Nisan (a Sabbath Day, or Friday/Saturday). This announcement would have been Wednesday (or Tuesday night).

and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.” Jesus now turns their minds to the nearness of the Passover festival and His coming death. The reference to the Passover gives it a sacrificial significance. Jesus is the Passover lamb (brought out clearly in verses 26–28).

The Religious Leaders Plot To Kill Jesus (26:3–5)

At the same time, the religious leaders form their plot when they will kill Jesus.

Matt. 26:3 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered together into the courtyard of the high priest named Caiaphas,

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *and the Scribes* after *the chief priests*. One manuscript reads *and the Pharisees* after *the chief priests*. *Codex Vaticanus* (B) does not have *of the people*.

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered together Matthew shows that the Jewish authorities are plotting at the same time.

into the courtyard of the high priest named Caiaphas, He was the ruling High Priest (A.D. 18-36) and was the son in law of the previous High Priest Annas.

Matt. 26:4 and they formed a plot that they would arrest Jesus by deceit and kill him.

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Vaticanus* (B) does not have *and kill Him*.

and they formed a plot that they would arrest Jesus The plot to kill Jesus is nothing new (cf. 12:41; 22:15).

by deceit and kill him. Matthew emphasizes the righteousness of Jesus and the unrighteousness of those who are plotting.

Matt. 26:5 But they were saying, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.

But they were saying, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people. Thousands of people would be in Jerusalem for the Passover and they did not want to put to death this popular Messianic figure. However, as Jesus predicted, He did die during the Passover.

The Anointing OF Jesus For Burial (26:6-13)

Jesus is anointed for burial by an unidentified woman.

Matt. 26:6 When Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,

When Jesus was in Bethany This was a village on the Mount of Olives nearly two miles east of Jerusalem. Jesus had probably been staying there (21:17).

in the house of Simon the leper, Simon is mentioned nowhere else in the New Testament except here and the parallel passage in Mark. Evidently he was a leper who had been healed by Jesus; otherwise there would have been no social interaction between them.

Matt. 26:7 a woman came to him having an alabaster flask of very expensive perfume, which she poured up on his head while he was reclining at the table.

a woman came to him having an alabaster flask of very expensive perfume, which she poured up on his head while he was reclining at the table. This woman is unnamed in Matthew's gospel. John identifies her as Mary of Bethany, sister of Martha and Lazarus (12:3). (for an explanation of the so-called contradictions between the accounts see the question at the end of this chapter).

Matt. 26:8 And when his disciples saw this, they became indignant, saying, “What is the purpose of this waste?”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the word *His*.

And when his disciples saw this, they became indignant, saying, “What is the purpose of this waste?” The disciples see this only as a waste.

Matt. 26:9 For this thing could have been sold for a high price and have been given to the poor.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *ointment (perfume)* after *this* (see Mark 14:5).

For this thing could have been sold for a high price and have been given to the poor. In ordinary circumstances this would have been the right thing to do, but these were no ordinary circumstances.

Matt. 26:10 And Jesus knowing this, said to them, “Why are you making trouble for this woman? She has worked a good work for me.

And Jesus knowing this, This reflects the supernatural knowledge of Jesus.

said to them, “Why are you making trouble for this woman? She has worked a good work for me. This woman has performed a special work of righteousness.

Matt. 26:11 For you have the poor with you always, but you do not always have me with you.

For you have the poor with you always, The poor are a reality in society in every age.

but you do not always have me with you. Yet Jesus’ time is only temporary.

Matt. 26:12 For when she poured this perfume upon my body, she did it to prepare for my burial.

For when she poured this perfume upon my body, she did it to prepare for my burial. This deed is symbolic of His burial.

Matt. 26:13 Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in all the world, what she has done will also be told as a memorial for her.

Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in all the world, what she has done will also be told as a memorial for her. This will be her reward for this act of kindness. This phrase could be translated *her memorial to me*.

Judas Prepares to Betray Jesus (26:14-16)

Judas Iscariot sets Jesus' betrayal in motion.

Matt. 26:14 Then one of the twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—proceeded toward the chief priests

Note on a variant reading: There are textual problems with the name *Judas Iscariot*. Some manuscripts read *Judas from Kerioth*. Other manuscripts read *Skariotas* which has suggested a large number of derivations such as “bandit” or “traitor,” “assassin” or “a man with a ruddy complexion.”

Then one of the twelve Matthew emphasizes the irony that Judas, one of the twelve, is the one who will betray Jesus.

—the one called Judas Iscariot— In contrast to Mary, we have Judas.

proceeded toward the chief priests He goes to the enemies of Jesus.

Matt. 26:15 and said, “What are you willing to give me if I betray him to you?” And they agreed with him for thirty pieces of silver.

Note on variant readings: After *and said* one manuscript (D) reads *to them*.

Instead of *pieces of silver* a couple of manuscripts read *staters* specifying what kind of silver coin.

and said, “What are you willing to give me if I betray him to you?” His motivation is money.

And they agreed with him This could possibly be translated *and they weighed out (to him)*.

for thirty pieces of silver. This was the price of a slave (Exodus 21:32), it was not a large amount of money.

Matt. 26:16 And from then on he was looking for a good opportunity to betray him.

Note on a variant reading: After *Him* some manuscripts have *to them*.

And from then on he was looking for a good opportunity to betray him. This betrayal must be away from the crowds.

The Last Supper (26:17-30)

Jesus eats with His disciples for the last time before His passion.

Matt. 26:17 On the first day of the unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus saying, “Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?”

On the first day of the unleavened bread, Either this was the first day of the seven days of the festival, or the day before the festival began.

the disciples came to Jesus saying, “Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?” This included finding a suitable place as well as the preparation of the lamb.

Matt. 26:18 And he said, “Go into the city toward such a one and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.’”

And he said, “Go into the city toward such a one and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.’” Some previous arrangement had been made.

Matt. 26:19 And the disciples did as Jesus directed them and prepared the Passover.

And the disciples did as Jesus directed them and prepared the Passover. The stage is now set for the events to follow.

Matt. 26:20 And when it became evening, He was reclining at the table with the twelve.

Note on a variant reading: After *the twelve* some manuscripts read *the disciples*.

And when it became evening, The custom was that the Passover meal was eaten at night (Thursday night according to our reckoning).

He was reclining at the table with the twelve. The table where Jesus eat was the triclinium.

Matt. 26:21 And while they were eating, he said, “Truly I say to you, that one of you will betray me.”

Note on a variant reading: Two papyrus manuscripts do not have the word *that*.

And while they were eating, he said, “Truly I say to you, that one of you will betray me.” Jesus makes the shocking disclosure.

Matt. 26:22 And they were exceedingly sad and everyone began to say to him, “Surely it is not I, Lord?”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *everyone began to say* many manuscripts read and *each one, in turn, began to say*. Several manuscripts do not have *to Him*.

And they were exceedingly sad This news was made them very sad.

and everyone began to say to him, They all, in unison, deny it will be them.

“Surely it is not I, Lord?” The way the question is worded in Greek expects a negative answer.

Matt. 26:23 And Jesus said, “The one who dipped his hand in the dish with me, will betray me.”

And Jesus said, “The one who dipped his hand in the dish with me, will betray me.” He says that the betrayer is one who enjoyed the intimate meal with Him.

Matt. 26:24 The Son of Man is going just as it stands written about him. But woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is being betrayed! It would be better for him if that man had not been born.”

The Son of Man is going just as it stands written about him. The fate of Jesus is no accident. It has been predicted by Scripture.

But woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is being betrayed! It would be better for him if that man had not been born.”
A solemn statement.

Matt. 26:25 Then Judas, the one who was betraying him, answered and said, “It is not I myself, Rabbi?” And he said to him, “You yourself has said it.”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *Jesus* instead of *He*.

Then Judas, the one who was betraying him, Judas spoke up like the rest.

answered and said, “It is not I myself, Judas questioned Jesus to see if He really knew the identity of the betrayer.

Rabbi?” Judas addresses Him as Rabbi instead of Lord.

And he said to him, “You yourself has said it.” He was probably expecting the same answer that He gave the other disciples. The *you* is emphatic in Greek.

Matt. 26:26 And while they were eating, Jesus took the bread and after blessing it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples and said, “Take, eat; for this is my body.”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *after blessing it* some manuscripts read *after giving thanks* (see Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24 and verse 27).

And while they were eating, This is further on in the meal after Judas had left.

Jesus took the bread We have the same order as in the feeding of the five thousand, break, bless, broke.

and after blessing it, This would be the traditional Jewish blessing.

broke it, The bread was broken and handed to the person next to Him.

and gave it to his disciples and said, “Take, eat; He commands them to eat the bread.

for this is my body.” Jesus give new symbolic value to the elements of the supper. He identifies the bread with His body. This one statement is among the most controversial in the entire New Testament. In what sense is the bread to be identified with the body of Jesus? (see question at the end of the chapter).

Matt. 26:27 Then he took a cup, blessed it and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *the cup* rather than *a cup*.

Then he took a cup, It is uncertain at what point of the Passover meal Jesus introduced His new symbolism.

blessed it, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. It is common, however, to relate the taking of the cup to the third cup, the cup of blessing (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:6). This would have been preceded by the drinking of two earlier cups of wine (cf. Luke 22:17), in between the bitter herbs had been eaten.

Matt. 26:28 For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for the many for the forgiveness of sins.

Note on a variant reading: After *covenant* some manuscripts have the word *new*.

For this is my blood of the covenant, Again we have the question, in what sense does the cup represent His blood?

which is poured out for the many for the forgiveness of sins. His blood symbolizes the covenant.

Matt. 26:29 But I say to you, “I shall certainly not drink, from now on, of the fruit of this vine, until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

But I say to you, “I shall certainly not drink, from now on, of the fruit of this vine, until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” This statement speaks of the imminence of His death.

Matt. 26:30 And after they sang hymns, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

And after they sang hymns, The word in Greek is a verb, not a noun. It does not tell us how many hymns were sung.

they went out to the Mount of Olives. At the end of the Passover meal a fourth and final hymn was sung.

From Matthew's account we find two reasons for observing the Lord's Supper. One looks backwards and the other looks forward. First, we commemorate Jesus' death. Second, we look forward to His return with believers.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial (26:31-35)

Jesus speaks of the scattering of all the disciples as well as specifically predicting the denials of Peter.

Matt. 26:31 Then Jesus said to them, "This very night all of you will be offended because of me, for it is written, 'I shall strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be thoroughly scattered.'

Then Jesus said to them, "This very night all of you will be offended because of me, This will happen in the same night.

for it is written, 'I shall strike the shepherd, Some untoward will happen to the leader.

and the sheep of the flock will be thoroughly scattered.' The sheep will be scattered when this happens.

Matt. 26:32 But after I have been raised, I will go before you into the Galilee.

But after I have been raised, I will go before you into the Galilee. This is another prediction of the resurrection. The meeting in Galilee is the last recorded incident in Jesus' ministry in Matthew.

Matt. 26:33 Peter answered and said to him, "Even if all will be offended because of you, I myself will never be offended."

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *to Him*. In one papyrus manuscript the words *because of You* appear after *I*. This results in the translation, *If all be offended, I myself will never be offended because of You*.

Peter answered and said to him, "Even if all will be offended because of you, He put himself in a different class than the others.

I myself will never be offended." As was his habit, Peter is saying what the others are thinking.

Matt. 26:34 Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you, that in this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny knowing me three times.”

Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you, that in this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny knowing me three times.” Before dawn Peter will deny Jesus three times.

Matt. 26:35 Peter said to him, “Even if it is necessary for me to die with you, I will certainly never deny you.” All the other disciples said the same thing.

Peter said to him, “Even if it is necessary for me to die with you, I will certainly never deny you.” His objection gets stronger. We all need to realize how weak we really are (1 Corinthians 10:12).

All the other disciples said the same thing. The disciples agree with Peter that they would never deny Jesus.

The Agony In Gethsemane (26:36-46)

Jesus prays to His Father while waiting to be betrayed.

Matt. 26:36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to the disciples, “Sit here until I go over there and begin to pray.”

Note on variant readings: Instead of *to the disciples* some manuscripts read *to them*. Some manuscripts read *His* after *disciples*.

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, Gethsemane means oil press. It was probably an olive orchard

and he said to the disciples, “Sit here until I go over there and begin to pray.”

Matt. 26:37 And he took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him. And he began to be sad and distressed.

And he took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him. Only the inner core of disciples is allowed to participate.

And he began to be sad and distressed. The distress was not the prospect of physical death, but rather having to die for the sins of the world.

Matt. 26:38 Then he said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sad, to the point of death. Remain here and watch with me.”

Then he said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sad, to the point of death. Remain here and watch with me.” Jesus was going to experience the wrath of God for the sins of mankind.

Matt. 26:39 And when he had gone forward a short distance, he fell upon his face, praying and saying, “My Father, if it is possible, take this cup from me. Nevertheless not as I myself will, but as you will.”

Note on variant readings: Instead of *when He had gone forward* many manuscripts read *having gone to (there)*. Some manuscripts do not have *My*. At the close of this verse some manuscripts read *And an angel from heaven appeared to Him strengthening Him. And when He was further in agony He began to pray. And His sweat came down like drops of blood and fell to the ground* (see Luke 22:43-44).

And when he had gone forward a short distance, he fell upon his face, praying and saying, “My Father, if it is possible, take this cup from me. The cup is symbolic of suffering and death.

Nevertheless not as I myself will, but as you will.” Ultimately what God the Father wants.

Matt. 26:40 And he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So you don’t have strength to watch with me for one hour?”

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *His* before *disciples*.

And he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So you don’t have strength to watch with me for one hour?” The disciples seem obvious as to what Jesus is going through.

Matt. 26:41 Watch and pray, so that you will not enter into temptation; for, on the one hand, the Spirit indeed is willing, but, on the other hand, the flesh is weak.

Watch and pray, so that you will not enter into temptation; for, on the one hand, the Spirit indeed is willing, but, on the other hand, the flesh is weak. We are to be spiritually alert.

Matt. 26:42 Again, the second time, he went away and began to pray saying, “My Father, if it is not possible to remove this thing, unless I drink it, let your will be done.”

Note on variant readings: Two manuscripts (including *Vaticanus*) do not have *saying*. One papyrus manuscript and a few others do not have *My*. Many manuscripts read *the cup* after *drink*. Many manuscripts have *from Me* after *this thing*.

Again, the second time, he went away and began to pray saying, “My Father, if it is not possible to remove this thing, unless I drink it, let your will be done.” Doing the will of the Father is of the utmost importance in the life of Jesus.

Matt. 26:43 And when he came back he found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy.

And when he came back he found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They could not stay awake.

Matt. 26:44 And leaving them again, he went away and began to pray the third time, praying again the same thing.

Note on variant readings: Many manuscripts do not have the second reference to *again*. This relieves the awkwardness of having the same word twice in the sentence. It is possible to punctuate this sentence differently by placing *and leaving them again* with the preceding sentence. It is also possible to end the sentence with *and leaving them* and start the next sentence with *again*.

And leaving them again, he went away and began to pray the third time, praying again the same thing. Jesus prays for the same thing three times.

Matt. 26:45 Then he returned to his disciples and said to them, “Sleep the remaining time and rest. Behold, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts do not have *His* before *disciples*. A few manuscripts do not have the word *Behold*.

Then he returned to his disciples and said to them, “Sleep the remaining time and rest. Behold, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. The final sequence of events is about to begin.

Matt. 26:46 Rise up, let us go! Behold, the one betraying me is close.”

Rise up, let us go! Behold, the one betraying me is close.” The traitor has arrived.

The Arrest In Gethsemane (26:47-56)

The traitor arrives and identifies Jesus where He is then arrested.

Matt. 26:47 And while he was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a great crowd with swords and clubs sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

And while he was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a great crowd with swords and clubs sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. The weapons showed respect for His power.

Matt. 26:48 And the one who betrayed him had given them a sign, saying, “Whom I kiss, it is he himself; seize him.”

And the one who betrayed him had given them a sign, saying, “Whom I kiss, it is he himself; seize him.” So no mistake would be made in the darkness. This shows Jesus had no outstanding physical characteristics. Otherwise they would have been mentioned.

Matt. 26:49 And immediately he came to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi, and he intensely kissed Him.”

And immediately he came to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi,” and he intensely kissed him.” He calls Jesus “Rabbi” not Lord.

Matt. 26:50 But Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you are here for?” Then they came forward, placed their hands upon Jesus, and arrested him.

But Jesus said to him, “Friend, This is not a friendly form of address. do what you are here for?” The words of Jesus *for which you are here* are notoriously difficult to translate. There are several possible meanings:

1. A command: [Do that] *for which you are here* [NIV]
2. A statement : [I know that] *for which you are here*.
3. A question: [What is the reason] *for which you are here?* [NIV margin].

The first two would again illustrate Jesus’ insight and voluntary acceptance of his destiny. The third would have been asked not out of ignorance but to highlight the wickedness of Judas’s action over against Jesus innocence? The best answer seems to be the first possibility.

Then they came forward, placed their hands upon Jesus, and arrested him. They have now done the foul deed.

Matt. 26:51 And behold, one of the ones with Jesus stretched forth his hand, drew his sword, and struck the servant of the chief priest, cutting off his ear.

And behold, one of the ones with Jesus Peter according to John 18:10,11,26.

stretched forth his hand, drew his sword, and struck the servant of the chief priest, cutting off his ear.

Matt. 26:52 Then Jesus said to him, “Return your sword to its place; for the ones taking up the sword will die by the sword.

Then Jesus said to him, “Return your sword to its place; for the ones taking up the sword will die by the sword. Violence begets violence.

Matt. 26:53 Or do you not think that I am able to call upon my Father, and he will provide me now with more than twelve legions of angels?

Or do you not think that I am able to call upon my Father, and he will provide me now with more than twelve legions of angels? If resistance was necessary Jesus could call upon His Father.

Matt. 26:54 How then would the Scriptures be fulfilled, that say it must occur in this manner?"

How then would the Scriptures be fulfilled, that say it must occur in this manner?" This reflects the divine necessity of the death of Jesus.

Matt. 26:55 In that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "As against a robber did you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me? Daily I was sitting in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.

In that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "As against a robber did you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me? Daily I was sitting in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. Jesus now speaks to the mob and criticizes their cowardice. He was no threat to them, this was not a violent revolutionary they were arresting.

Matt. 26:56 But all this happened that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples abandoned him and began to flee.

But all this happened that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples abandoned him and began to flee. The note about the disciples fleeing shows their promises earlier were empty.

The Trial Of Jesus Before the Sanhedrin (26:57-68)

Jesus is now brought before the Jewish leaders for a trial.

Matt. 26:57 And the ones who arrested Jesus led him toward Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered together.

And the ones who arrested Jesus led him toward Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered together. It is clear that the mob had been sent by the Jewish authorities under the direction of the high priest.

Matt. 26:58 And Peter was following after him from a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. And he entered inside and sat down with the attendants to see the outcome.

And Peter was following after him from a distance, When Peter fled he apparently did not go too far.

right up to the courtyard of the high priest. And he entered inside and sat down with the attendants to see the outcome. He followed at a distance to see the outcome.

Matt. 26:59 And the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so they could put him to death.

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts read *and the elders* after *chief priests*.

And the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so they could put him to death. The Jewish authorities had begun to gather witnesses to make a case against Jesus. However they were not prepared for the suddenness of the trial. The goal was not justice, but rather to put Jesus to death.

Matt. 26:60 And they did not find many coming forward to testify falsely. But finally two came forward,

And they did not find many coming forward to testify falsely. But finally two came forward, They could not find the false witnesses they needed.

Matt. 26:61 saying, “This one said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’

saying, “This one said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’ This is a garbled understanding of Jesus prediction of His death and resurrection (see John 2:18-22). Matthew does not record this prediction.

Matt. 26:62 Then the high priest rose up and said to him, “Are you not answering anything concerning what these are accusing against you?”

Then the high priest rose up and said to him, “Are you not answering anything concerning what these are accusing against you?” The High Priest becomes flustered.

Matt. 26:63 And Jesus remained silent. The chief priest said to him, “I put you under oath according to the living God: You tell us if you yourself are the Christ, the Son of God.”

And Jesus remained silent. The chief priest said to him, “I put you under oath according to the living God: This question is more solemn because He puts Jesus under oath.

You tell us if you yourself are the Christ, the Son of God.” They want some sort of confessional statement from Him.

Matt. 26:64 And Jesus said to him, “You have said it. Nevertheless I say to all of you: from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

And Jesus said to him, “You have said it. The answer is not evasive but affirmative.

Nevertheless I say to all of you: from now on Not merely to them personally but in a general sense.

will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Nowhere does Jesus reveal more about Himself than here. Here He refers to Daniel 7:13 and the Son of Man before the Ancient of Days.

Matt. 26:65 Then the high priest tore his clothing saying, “He has blasphemed! Why yet do we have need of further witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy.

Then the high priest tore his clothing saying, “He has blasphemed! Why yet do we have need of further witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy. This statement convinced them that Jesus had committed blasphemy.

Matt. 26:66 What do you think? And they answered saying, “He is deserving of death.”

What do you think? And they answered saying, “He is deserving of death.” The statement by Jesus was considered by them to be worthy of the death penalty.

Matt. 26:67 Then they spit into his face and struck him with their fist; and others said,

Then they spit into his face and struck him with their fist; and others said, They now begin to treat Him unlawfully.

Matt. 26:68 “Prophecy to us, you Christ. Who is it who hit you?”

“Prophecy to us, you Christ. Who is it who hit you?” They are ridiculing and beating Him while He is defenseless.

Peter Denies Jesus (26:69-75)

Peter now denies the Lord as Jesus had predicted.

Matt. 26:69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard; and one of the slave girls came to him, saying, “You yourself were also with Jesus of Galilee.”

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard; and one of the slave girls came to him, saying, “You yourself were also with Jesus of Galilee.” Peter is noticed by one of the women who insists that he was with Jesus.

Matt. 26:70 And he denied before all of them saying, “I do not know what you are saying.”

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts do not have the word *them*. One manuscript reads *them* but does not have *all*. A few manuscripts read *nor do I understand* after *what you are saying* (see the parallel in Mark 14:68).

And he denied before all of them saying, “I do not know what you are saying.” The first of the denials.

Matt. 26:71 Then he went to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him. She said to the ones there, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

Note on variant readings: A few manuscripts have the word *servant girl* spelled out in the text. Most manuscripts read the Greek word *another*. However since it is in the feminine gender here *servant girl* is to be understood. Many manuscripts have the word *also* after *this man* (see Luke 22:59).

Then he went to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him. She said to the ones there, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” The accusations continue that Peter was a disciple of Jesus.

Matt. 26:72 And he denied it again with an oath: “I do not know the man.”

Note on a variant reading: After *oath* some manuscripts read *saying*.

And he denied it again with an oath: “I do not know the man.” The denials also continue, this time he takes an oath.

Matt. 26:73 And after a little while, the ones standing around came to Peter, and said, “Certainly you also are one of them, for your speech is making you evident.”

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts do not have *you also*. See the parallel in Mark 14:70.

Some manuscripts read *You are a Galilean and* between *for* and *your* (see Mark 14:70). Instead of *making you evident* a couple of manuscripts read *is similar* (to Jesus).

And after a little while, the ones standing around came to Peter, and said, “Certainly you also are one of them, for your speech is making you evident.” His accent now gives him away.

Matt. 26:74 Then he began to curse and took an oath, “I do not know the man!” Immediately the rooster crowed.

Then he began to curse and took an oath, “I do not know the man!” Immediately the rooster crowed. With great emotion, Peter continues to deny knowing Jesus.

Matt. 26:75 Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken, “Before the rooster crows, three times you will deny me. And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Note on a variant reading: After *spoken* many manuscripts have *to him*.

Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken, “Before the rooster crows, three times you will deny me. And he went outside and wept bitterly. Peter is remorseful for his sinful deeds and expression heartfelt repentance.

Summary to Chapter 26

The time has come for Jesus to fulfill His express purpose for coming to earth. He predicts that His death will be in the next few days—during the feast of the Passover. At the same time the religious leaders are plotting His death but they plan for a later time. Since Jesus has been running the program the entire time, His death will be on schedule, His schedule.

His impending death is anticipated in His anointing by an unnamed woman. He promises that her act will not be forgotten. The fact that Matthew tells this story and that we are reading it fulfills the prophecy of Jesus.

Jesus then sends His disciples to prepare for the Passover. He had prearranged this with an unnamed individual.

As they are eating the Last Supper, He shocks them by predicting His betrayal by one of them. All of them deny it together. When Judas asks Jesus the question whether or not it is him, Jesus lets him know that He knows.

After Judas leaves to do his evil deed Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper. The elements, the bread and the wine, are representative of His body and blood that will be poured out for the forgiveness of our sins.

They then journey to Gethsemane. Jesus asks the Father if there is any other way for the redemption of mankind to take place. Since there is not, He will willingly go to His death on our behalf.

Jesus is then betrayed by Judas with a kiss. The armed group arrests Him and bring Him before the religious leaders. They hold an illegal trial where they attempt to find false witnesses to accuse Him.

Finally, He admits under oath that He is the Messiah and that He will return on the clouds of heaven.

The Gospel According To Matthew

This was enough for the religious leaders who decided His statements were worthy of death.

As Jesus was brought before the religious leaders, Peter, as Jesus predicted, denied Jesus a number of times. When Peter realizes what he has done he goes out and cries intensely

**Matthew
Chapter 27**

Jesus is tried, condemned and executed by means of crucifixion.

Jesus Brought To Pilate (27:1-2)

After His arrest, Jesus is brought to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate.

Matt. 27:1 And when it became early in the morning, all the chief priests and elders of the people formed a plot against Jesus so as to put him to death;

And when it became early in the morning, all the chief priests and elders of the people The religious leaders held some type of brief trial for Jesus the next morning. It was a daytime reenactment of what had happened the night before. The purpose was to follow the letter of the law.

formed a plot against Jesus so as to put him to death; It seems that the Jews did not have the right to execute capital offenders (John 18:31). Only the Romans could do this.

Matt. 27:2 And they bound him, and lead him away, and delivered him over to Pilate, the governor.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have the word *Pontius* before *Pilate*.

And they bound him, and lead him away, and delivered him over to Pilate, the governor. Early in the morning they brought Jesus to the Roman ruler Pontius Pilate the *prefect* of Judea. The office of *procurator* was established after Herod Archelaus had been deposed in A.D. 6. Pilate held this office from 26-36. His appointment came directly from Rome.

He was to be loyal to Caesar but, at the same time, pacify the Jews so they would not riot. It was not a highly desired job.

The Death Of Judas (27:3-10)

The betrayer Judas feels remorse and goes out and hangs himself.

The account of Judas complements the story of Peter. Both were warned about what they would do and both stories had unhappy endings: Peter crying bitterly and Judas hanging himself. However Peter, contrary to Judas experienced genuine repentance.

Matt. 27:3 Then when Judas, the one who betrayed him, saw that he was condemned, he was filled with remorse, and he returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders,

Then when Judas, the one who betrayed him, saw that he was condemned, he was filled with remorse, Like Peter earlier, Judas also

has a change of heart. The motives for this change is unknown. He may not have expected his betrayal to lead to Jesus' death. It is possible that he thought Jesus would escape arrest or at least not receive such a harsh sentence. Perhaps he hoped Jesus would now mount some type of revolt against the Romans. Whatever the reason, he was filled with regret.

The word translated "remorse" refers to a "change of feeling" or "regret." It is not the same as full repentance (as was the case with Peter). In 2 Corinthians 7:8 this remorse precedes repentance while Hebrews 7:21 refers to it as a change of mind and not sorrow for sin.

and he returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, His sorrow causes him to return the money to the elders.

Matt. 27:4 saying, "I have sinned; I have betrayed innocent blood." And they said, "What is it to us? You yourself see to it."

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *innocent blood* some manuscripts read *righteous blood*.

saying, **"I have sinned;** Judas acknowledges that he has done wrong but does not take any corrective action. He confessed to the wrong group of people.

I have betrayed innocent blood." He testifies that Jesus was innocent.

And they said, "What is it to us? You yourself see to it." They have no desire to deal with the matter further. Case closed.

Matt. 27:5 And after throwing the money into the temple, he left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

And after throwing the money into the temple, Upset, he throws the money to the floor (probably in the temple treasury room).

he left. Then he went away and hanged himself. Judas then leaves and commits suicide. His action is similar to Ahithophel (2 Samuel 17:23).

We are not to conclude from this episode that suicide automatically sends a person to damnation. People who are believers can lose control of the senses and make the horrible and selfish choice of taking their own life. On the other hand, the Scripture never commends suicide as do certain non-Christians religions (e.g. Islam). Suicide is always a sin and violates the Sixth Commandment, "You will not kill" (Exodus 20:13) even if it can be forgiven.

However in the case of Judas, there is no evidence that he ever was a believer. Hanging, to the Jews, would have confirmed God's curse upon him (Deuteronomy 21:23). The recording of Judas' fate by Matthew would serve as a warning to those who would commit apostasy.

Matt. 27:6 But the chief priests took the money and said, “It is not lawful for us to place it into the treasury, since it is blood money.”

But the chief priests took the money and said, “It is not lawful for us to place it into the treasury, It is amazing how the religious leaders are occupied with the letter of the law and not its spirit. Judas’ confession that Jesus was innocent had no effect upon them whatsoever. They were only concerned about the finer points of their traditions—what to do with the blood money.

since it is blood money.” There is a double meaning in this term. To the Jewish leaders it relates to Judas’ betrayal of Jesus, but for Matthew it also refers to Judas’ death.

Matt. 27:7 So they took counsel and bought with it the potter’s field for the burial place of foreigners.

So they took counsel and bought with it the potter’s field for the burial place of foreigners. Since the money was ritually impure they could not keep it in the temple, so they used it to buy a field for a cemetery for non-Jews. Therefore the unclean money was used to buy an unclean place for unclean people.

The mention of the potter’s field by Matthew seems to indicate a well-known place.

Matt. 27:8 Therefore that field is called the “Field of blood” to this day.

Therefore that field is called the “Field of blood” The field retained the new name.

to this day. At the time of the writing of Matthew’s gospel.

Matt. 27:9 Then was fulfilled that which was said through Jeremiah the prophet, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him who was priced, whom some of the sons of Israel priced.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *Zechariah* instead of *Jeremiah*.

Then was fulfilled Matthew records this story to show the fulfillment of Scripture.

that which was said through Jeremiah the prophet, This reference to Jeremiah has caused much controversy since the quotation seems to be from Zechariah and not Jeremiah (see questions at the end of the chapter).

saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him who was priced, whom some of the sons of Israel priced. This closely resembles Zechariah 11:12-13 with its reference to thirty pieces of silver thrown in the house of the Lord.

Matt. 27:10 And they gave them for the potter's field, just as the Lord directed me.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *he gave to them*, rather than *they gave to them*.

And they gave them for the potter's field, just as the Lord directed me." Zechariah also records that the money goes to the potter.

Jesus Is Sentenced By Pilate (27:11-16)

Jesus is now brought before Pilate who sentences Him to death.

Matt. 27:11 And Jesus was placed before the governor; and the governor questioned him saying, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And Jesus said, "You yourself are saying it."

And Jesus was placed before the governor; Matthew now picks up the narrative where he left off in verse two.

and the governor questioned him saying, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Pilate has a different question than Caiaphas. His only concern is if Jesus broke Roman law by trying to proclaim Himself king.

And Jesus said, "You yourself are saying it." The reply of Jesus is that these are Pilate's words, not His. Yes, Jesus is the king of the Jews but not in the way Pilate fears. Jesus kingdom is not of this world system (John 18:36,37). He was not there to usurp the authority of Caesar. He has committed no crime against Rome.

Matthew records another case of Gentile of testifying to Jesus' kingship (although unwittingly).

Matt. 27:12 And when he was being accused by the chief priests and the elders, he answered nothing.

And when he was being accused by the chief priests and the elders, Pilate now listens to the charges of the religious rulers.

he answered nothing. Jesus, unlike other charged, does not defend Himself.

Matt. 27:13 Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear what sort of things they are testifying against you, do you not?"

Then Pilate said to him, "You do hear what sort of things they are testifying against you, do you not?" The way the question is worded in the Greek assumes a positive answer. Pilate, not used to seeing the accused remaining silent, asks Jesus an exasperated question.

Matt. 27:14 And he did not answer him, not even one word, so that the governor was greatly astonished.

And he did not answer him, not even one word, so that the governor was greatly astonished. Jesus still does not answer which leads to the further astonishment of the governor.

Matt. 27:15 Now at the feast, it had been the governor's custom to release one prisoner chosen by the crowd.

Now at the feast, it had been the governor's custom to release one prisoner chosen by the crowd. Pilate realizes that the case against Jesus is not strong. In addition, Jesus was a popular figure with the crowd and hence the jealousy this caused with the religious leaders. His way out of the situation is appealing to a custom to release a popular prisoner at Passover time.

Matt. 27:16 They had then a notorious prisoner called Jesus Barabbas.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *JESUS* before *Barabbas*.

They had then a notorious prisoner called Jesus Barabbas. Pilate expects the crowd to choose Jesus because the other candidate is a particularly notorious criminal (Mark 15:7 tells us he was a murderer).

There is an interesting parallel between the name of Barabbas and the identity of Jesus. Barabbas means "son of a father," while Jesus was the unique Son of the Heavenly Father. However, with respect to their character, there were no parallels.

Matt. 27:17 Therefore when the crowd had gathered Pilate asked them, "Whom do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus the one called Christ?"

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have *JESUS* before *Barabbas*.

Therefore when the crowd had gathered Pilate asked them, "Whom do you want me to release to you: The crowd is now given their choice.

Jesus Barabbas, Which Jesus will they choose? The criminal?

or Jesus, Or the Savior?

the one called Christ?" Pilate obviously thinks Jesus did not deserve this title.

Matt. 27:18 For he knew that they handed him over because of envy.

For he knew that they handed him over because of envy. Matthew reinforces Pilate's understanding for the reason Jesus had been arrested.

Matt. 27:19 But while he was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him a message, saying; "Have nothing to do with that righteous man; for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of him."

But while he was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him a message, saying; "Have nothing to do with that righteous man; for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of him." Like the Magi, another Gentile receives a dream about Jesus. Matthew again is stressing the lack of guilt on the Roman side. The true instigators of Jesus' death were the Jewish authorities.

Matt. 27:20 But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The insecure Pilate does not heed his wife's request nor the Roman principles of justice.

Matt. 27:21 And the governor said to them, "Which of these two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas."

And the governor said to them, "Which of these two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas." The choice of Barabbas surprised Pilate.

Matt. 27:22 And Pilate asked them, "What, therefore, shall I do with Jesus, the one called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified."

And Pilate asked them, "What, therefore, shall I do with Jesus, the one called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified." Pilate did not expect this answer from the crowd on what to do with this popular figure.

Matt. 27:23 But he said, "What evil has he done?" But all the more they were shouting out saying, "Let him be crucified."

But he said, "What evil has he done?" Pilate is baffled by their response.

But all the more they were shouting out saying, "Let him be crucified." How could the crowds change so quickly? A few days earlier on Palm Sunday they were hailing Him as their Messiah, now they were calling for His life?

Part of the answer lies in the fact that the crowd hailing Him on Palm Sunday were Galileans while this crowd was mainly dwellers of Jerusalem. In addition, any Messianic expectations they would have had about Jesus would have been dampened seeing Him in prison and on trial for His life. Also crowd behavior can easily be manipulated by a few clever people. All this factors led to the crowds irrational behavior.

Matt. 27:24 But when Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere but rather an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this man; you yourselves see to it.”

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *the blood of this one*, some manuscripts read *the blood of this righteous one*.

But when Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere but rather an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, Pilate makes a dramatic gesture showing that he has no responsibility in the death of Jesus. Rome has not consented to Jesus' execution but in order to avoid a riot Pilate allows this miscarriage of justice. Matthew again is emphasizing the guilt of the Jewish leaders though he is hardly exonerating Pilate.

“I am innocent of the blood of this man; Pilate's washing of his hands did not absolve him of his guilt in the matter. As the apostles' creed states Jesus was crucified under “Pontius Pilate.”

you yourselves see to it.” It's your responsibility, not mine Pilate says. Interestingly, Pilate's words are similar to the Jewish leaders rebuff of Judas (verse 4). Matthew shows that neither the Roman or Jewish leaders behaved responsibly in this incident.

Matt. 27:25 And all the crowd answered and said, “His blood be upon us and upon our children.”

And all the crowd answered and said, “His blood be upon us and upon our children.” The crowd accepts the responsibility for Jesus' death. The rejection of Jesus by the nation now reaches its climax (12:45: 23:36). The wicked generation that Jesus spoke about now has done their awful deed. The immediate judgment for this crime was in the destruction of their city and temple in the same generation (A.D. 70).

There may be a parallel here between the crowd and the disciples. Just as one of the twelve betrayed innocent blood so also some of the crowd accepts the blame for Jesus' blood.

Unfortunately, this statement has been the rationale for many for the persecution of the Jews. This does not mean that God took serious their request. In a short time Jesus will ask for the Father to forgive them people for what they did and said.

Matt. 27:26 Then he released Barabbas to them, but he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Then he released Barabbas to them, Barabbas is released per the crowd's request.

but he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified. This flogging was fatal to many prisoners. It consisted of a metal tipped whip

known as the *flagellum* which would rip into the flesh of the victims back. In recording this, Matthew shows that the Romans shared in the guilt of the treatment of Jesus.

The Soldiers Ridicule Jesus (27:27-31)

After Pilate sentences Jesus to die, the Roman soldiers ridicule him.

Matt. 27:27 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him.

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium This was the official residence of the Roman ruler. The exact location is uncertain (either the Antonia fortress or Herod's palace).

and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. The company consisted of 600 troops about one tenth of a legion.

Matt. 27:28 And after stripping off his clothing, they placed a scarlet robe around him,

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *stripping off His clothing*, some manuscripts read *and putting on His clothing*.

And after stripping off his clothing, they placed a scarlet robe around him, Jesus predicted this moment of ridicule would occur (20:19).

Matt. 27:29 and twisted a crown of thorns, and placed it upon his head, and placed a reed in his right hand. And they kneeled before him and insulted him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews."

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *they insulted Him* some manuscripts read *they were insulting Him*.

and twisted a crown of thorns, and placed it upon his head, and placed a reed in his right hand. And they kneeled before him and insulted him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews." The phrase "king of the Jews" echoed the words of Pilate's question.

Matt. 27:30 and they spat upon on him and took the reed and were continually beating him upon his head.

and they spat upon on him and took the reed and were continually beating him upon his head. The ridicule continues as does the beating.

Matt. 27:31 And when they had ridiculed him, they stripped off his cloak and put on his own clothes, and led him away to crucify him.

And when they had ridiculed him, they stripped off his cloak and put on his own clothes, and led him away to crucify him. Normally criminals were crucified naked but the return of Jesus' clothes was probably

a concession of the Roman's to Jewish sensibilities seeing that it was a shame to appear naked in public.

The Crucifixion Of Jesus (27:32-44)

Jesus is crucified at Golgotha.

Matt. 27:32 And while they were proceeding out, they found a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they compelled this one to carry his cross.

And while they were proceeding out, they found a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they compelled this one to carry his cross. Convicted criminals usually carried their own horizontal beam to the site of the execution. Jesus, however, was too weak from the flogging to do this.

Matt. 27:33 And when they came to the place called Golgotha, which means the "Place of the Skull,"

And when they came to the place called Golgotha, The Latin term for *Golgotha* is *Calvary*. The exact location is unknown. The two competing sites are the church of the Holy Sepulcher and Gordon's Calvary.

which means the "Place of the Skull," It is also not known why this place was called the place of the skull. Three suggestions have been made.

1. The hill was in a shape of a skull.
2. Executions were performed there.
3. Skulls of executed criminals were left there.

Matt. 27:34 they gave him wine mixed with gall to drink; and after tasting it, he refused to drink it.

they gave him wine mixed with gall to drink; and after tasting it, he refused to drink it. This is possibly a pain-killing narcotic or it may have been poison. Whatever the case, Jesus refused to drink it. He will not lose consciousness or decrease any of His suffering.

Matt. 27:35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothing, by casting lots.

Note on a variant reading: After *casting lots* some manuscripts read *that it might be fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet; they divided my clothing among themselves and for my outer garment they cast a lot.*

And when they had crucified him, Crucifixion was one of the most horrible methods of execution that man has ever invented. Sometimes it took days for the person to die.

they divided his clothing, by casting lots. The soldiers are gambling for His clothing as He is dying.

Matt. 27:36 And they were sitting down observing him there.

And they were sitting down observing him there. It is hard to believe that humanity could sink this low

Matt. 27:37 And they placed over his head the written accusation against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

And they placed over his head the written accusation against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. The title was on a wooden placard nailed to the top of the cross. The title is another irony, giving the appearance that the Romans believed that Jesus was the king of the Jews. Unknown to them is that the sign did proclaim the truth. In John's gospel (19:20-22) he further explains the irony.

Matt. 27:38 And there were two robbers being crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

Note on a variant reading: One old Latin manuscript supplies the names of the two robbers crucified with Jesus! *Zoatham* and *Camma* respectively.

And there were two robbers being crucified with him, The word robber probably refers to an insurrectionist or rebel like Barabbas. They were more likely terrorists and murderers than robbers. It is possible that His cross had been prepared for Barabbas.

one on his right and one on his left. Matthew notes the parody of Jesus' kingship by the fact they put one of these murderers on each side of Him. As a king has his advisors on his right and left side, so the crucified king has these criminals placed on each side.

Mark 15:32 says that those who were crucified with Jesus insulted Him while Luke 23:39 says one of the robbers asked for forgiveness. How can this be reconciled?

The answer may be in what is known as the categorical plural where the plural form is actually used for the singular. Greek scholar Daniel Wallace explains:

Rather than *they* meaning *someone*, *they* means *he* (or *she*). . . . It consists in a plural referring in reality to a singular subject. . . The reason that the plural is used is that it more easily yields itself to a generic notion: the force of the usage, it seems is to focus more on the action than the actor. That is not to say the actor is unimportant; rather the actor is important only in a generic sense: "This is the kind of person who does this." . . .

Recognition of this category opens up the possibility that several texts say something other than what is normally construed. In particular, seeing the categorical plural in certain places seems to harmonize two texts that stand in tension. This does not, of course, mean that such an expedient should

be at one's whim; but neither should one assume contradictions in the biblical record when the basis for doing so is the English way of looking at things (Wallace, p. 404).

Applying this to Mark 15:32 and Luke 23:39, Wallace writes: 'The parallel in Luke 23:39 explicitly says that only one of the thieves railed against Jesus. One explanation for the difference might be that Mark emphasized the generic while Luke focused on the particular. It is as if Mark had said, "It was not even beneath the kind of person crucified with Jesus to revile him"' (Wallace, p. 405).

Matt. 27:39 And the ones who were proceeding along were blaspheming him, shaking their heads,

And the ones who were proceeding along were blaspheming him, shaking their heads, Public executions were usually performed on well-traveled roads.

Matt. 27:40 saying, "The one who destroys the temple and rebuilds it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

saying, "The one who destroys the temple and rebuilds it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Here is the last temptation of Jesus. He could have chosen to come down from the cross. If He had done so He would not have fulfilled the role of the innocent lamb slain on our behalf (John 1:29; Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:26-28). He remained faithful to the end despite the unspeakable agony.

Matt. 27:41 Likewise also the chief priests, ridiculing Him with the scribes and the elders, were saying,

Likewise also the chief priests, ridiculing him with the scribes and the elders, were saying, Jesus, in His death, illustrates His own principle, "whoever wants to save His life will lose it, and whoever loses His life for Me will find it" (16:25).

Matt. 27:42 He saved others, himself he is not able to save. He is the king of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

He saved others, himself he is not able to save. He is the king of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. They do not understand that Jesus voluntarily chose to do this—for *them* as well as for the rest of the world!

Matt. 27:43 He trusted in God, let him rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'

He trusted in God, let him rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.' They continue the sarcasm.

Matt. 27:44 In the same way, the robbers who were crucified together with him, were insulting him.

In the same way, the robbers who were crucified together with him, were insulting him. The criminals join in the ridiculing though Luke (20:40-43) notes that one later repents.

Matt. 27:45 And from the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all that land.

And from the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all that land. The crucifixion of Jesus began sometime in the midmorning. About noon an unusual darkness came over all the land. This miraculous event covered either only the land of Israel or the entire earth.

Matt. 27:46 And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a great voice, saying, “Eli Eli lema sabachthani;” which means, “My God, my God, why did you abandon me?”

And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a great voice, saying, “Eli Eli lema sabachthani;” This is the only words of Christ on the cross that Matthew records. It is probably the fourth chronologically of the seven sayings of Christ on the cross.

which means, “My God, my God, why did you abandon me?” There are all kinds of questions that this statement raises which Matthew does not explain. The main issue is with respect the two natures of Christ—the human and the divine—and how we understand this phrase in light of this. The passage seems to teach that there was some separation between the Father and Son when the penalty for the sins of the world were placed upon Him. There is no truth to the Gnostic view that Jesus’ divine nature departed shortly before His death.

Matt. 27:47 When certain of the ones standing there heard it, they said, “He is calling for Elijah.”

When certain of the ones standing there heard it, they said, “He is calling for Elijah.” We do not know whether the speech of Jesus was slurred or that His accent was not comprehended by the passers by. Whatever the case, some mistakenly thought that He was calling for Elijah to rescue Him. The prophet Elijah was well known to precede the Day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5).

Matt. 27:48 And immediately one of them ran and took a sponge and filled it with sour wine and placed it upon a reed, and gave it to Him to drink.

And immediately one of them ran and took a sponge and filled it with sour wine and placed it upon a reed, and gave it to him to drink. One unidentified member of the crowd seems to have sensed His deep agony

and again offers a pain killer or perhaps just a thirst quencher (see John 19:28-30).

Matt. 27:49 But the rest of them were saying, “Let it be. Let us see if Elijah is coming to save him.”

Note on a variant reading: After this verse some manuscripts read *And another one took a spear and thrust it into his side, and water and blood came out.*

But the rest of them were saying, “Let it be. Let us see if Elijah is coming to save him.” The rest of the crowd tells the man to stop so that they can see if Elijah will indeed appear.

The Death And Burial Of Jesus (27:50-61)

Jesus dies and is buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

Matt. 27:50 But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his Spirit.

But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice Jesus cries out loud (Luke 23:46 records His words of trust).

and gave up his Spirit. This is an idiomatic way of saying someone has died for the Jews believed that a person's spirit departed from his body when he stopped breathing. However there may be more to that here. Jesus in His human nature voluntarily gives up His life.

Matt. 27:51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn into two pieces from top to the bottom. The earth was shaken and the rocks were split.

And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn into two pieces from top to the bottom. Two more miraculous events surround Jesus' death. The curtain of the temple was torn from top to bottom symbolizing God is the one who has done this.

This signifies judgment against the temple. If Matthew had in mind the curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies then it would be referring to direct access to God based upon Jesus' death (Hebrews 4:16).

The earth was shaken and the rocks were split. The second miracle is the earthquake at the moment of Jesus' death.

Matt. 27:52 And the tombs were opened, and many bodies of those saints that had died were raised;

And the tombs were opened, and many bodies of those saints that had died were raised; The earthquake supernaturally opened the tombs and many saints were raised from the death.

Matt. 27:53 And after his resurrection they came out of the tombs, and entered into the holy city, and appeared to many.

And after his resurrection they came out of the tombs, and entered into the holy city, and appeared to many. Many unanswered questions come with this episode which is only found in Matthew's gospel. These saints were raised after Jesus resurrection and if they received resurrected bodies, rather than merely being reanimated to life (like Jairus daughter and Lazarus), then they soon went to heaven as did Jesus at His ascension.

It is also interesting to note that Jerusalem is still called the holy city even after this judgment.

Matt. 27:54 But when the centurion, and those who were with him guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that happened, they became very much afraid, and they said, "Truly he was the Son of God."

But when the centurion, and those who were with him guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that happened, they became very much afraid, and they said, "Truly he was the Son of God." This is another act of faith from Gentiles. They recognize something special about the man who had just died.

Matt. 27:55 Now there were many women there who were watching from a distance, who had followed Jesus from the Galilee providing for him;

Now there were many women there who were watching from a distance, who had followed Jesus from the Galilee providing for him; Another group is introduced who were at the crucifixion scene. This is the first indication that any of Jesus' followers were there at His death. The disciples had all left in fear, though John returned at a later time (John 19:26,27).

Matt. 27:56 among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jacob and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jacob and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. The specific mention of these women is interesting since Jesus' own mother, Mary, is not mentioned in Matthew as being at the scene. Only John (19:31-37) tells us that she was there.

Matt. 27:57 When it became late, a rich man, named Joseph of Arimathea, who was himself a disciple of Jesus, came;

When it became late, The sun had apparently returned

a rich man, named Joseph of Arimathea, who was himself a disciple of Jesus, came; We are now introduced to a secret disciple of Jesus—Joseph of Arimathea. He does what the other disciples will not do, comes

forward to claim the body of Jesus. We know that he belonged to the Sanhedrin (Mark 15:43) and that he had not yet revealed publicly that he was a disciple of Jesus (John 19:38).

Matt. 27:58 This man approached Pilate and requested the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded him to be given.

This man approached Pilate and requested the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded him to be given. Pilate grants his request for the body of Jesus.

Matt. 27:59 Joseph took the body of Jesus, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

Joseph took the body of Jesus, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, John provides more details of Jesus' burial telling us that Nicodemus helped in the burial preparations.

Matt. 27:60 and placed it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And when he had rolled a large stone at the door of the tomb, he went away.

and placed it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. The tomb that Jesus was buried looked like the present Garden Tomb in the city of Jerusalem—which may indeed be the correct site.

And when he had rolled a large stone at the door of the tomb, he went away. The stone was a boulder that was run down a steep incline.

Matt. 27:61 Now Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

And there was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary opposite the tomb. This statement shows they knew which tomb to come back to refuting the theory that somehow they went to the wrong tomb on Easter Sunday.

The Guard Is Placed At The Tomb (27:62-66)

The religious leaders ask Pilate for a guard.

Matt. 27:62 And the next day, that is after the Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together with Pilate,

And the next day, This would be Saturday.

that is after the Preparation Day, The preparation day for the Sabbath, not for the Passover.

the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together with Pilate, Pilate now receives another request but this time from the religious leaders.

Matt. 27:63 saying, “Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’

saying, “Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ They remember Jesus claims that He will rise.

Matt. 27:64 Command therefore to secure the tomb until the third day. Otherwise his disciples may come and steal him and say to the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.”

Command therefore to secure the tomb until the third day. Otherwise his disciples may come and steal him and say to the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first. They do not believe that He will rise, they merely want to stop the disciples from stealing the body so they won’t make that claim.

Matt. 27:65 Pilate said to them, “Take a guard; go, make it as secure as you know.”

Pilate said to them, “Take a guard; go, make it as secure as you know.” These words of Pilate are open to different interpretation. He could be telling them that they already have a guard in the temple police and so they are to use them. Or he could be ordering the Roman guard to be used temporarily at the tomb of Jesus. The best answer seems to be that he provided the Roman guard.

Matt. 27:66 And they went away and made the tomb secure, having sealed the stone, together with the guard.

And they went away and made the tomb secure, having sealed the stone, together with the guard. The securing of the tomb would have involved placing the imperial stamp of Rome on the tomb tied with a rope or large cord.

The seal would speak of the power and authority of Rome. Anyone breaking the seal would be punished. Therefore with the large stone, the presence of the Roman guard, and the imperial seal, all possible grave robbers would seemingly be deterred.

However, there was one thing that had not crossed their mind, that Jesus Himself would be raised from the dead!

Summary to Chapter 27

Though innocent of any crime, nevertheless Jesus is brought before Pontius Pilate. Though guilty of no charge, Pilate delivers Him over to be crucified after the crowd rejects His release in favor of Barabbas.

The Gospel According To Matthew

After being flogged, beaten, and ridiculed by the Roman soldiers, Jesus is led away to crucifixion. He is crucified between two criminals where He is further insulted and taunted by the religious leaders.

Upon His death, Jesus' body is taken by a secret disciple—Joseph of Arimathea—and placed in his new tomb.

The religious leaders come to Pilate the next day and ask him to secure the tomb, seeing that Jesus had predicted His resurrection. Pilate agrees with their request.

The chapter ends with the tomb guarded by a large stone, the imperial seal of Rome, and the Roman guard. The religious leaders assumed that this would be enough to keep any grave robbers away. There is, however, one thing they did not consider, the possibility that He would rise from the dead!

**Matthew
Chapter 28**

This is climatic chapter in Matthew—the victory of the Lord Jesus over death. Without this event in Christ’s life, His ministry would have been a failure. The resurrection demonstrates that He is indeed the Lord of life (1 Corinthians 15:12-20).

The Empty Tomb (28:1-8)

The tomb is empty on Easter Sunday. The women that come to anoint the body of a dead man instead find an angel telling them that Jesus has risen, just as He said!

Matt. 28:1 After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

After the Sabbath, The word *Sabbath* refers to the Sabbath Day, or ‘Saturday,’ namely, the seventh day of the week (see also 12:2). The Greek word *Sabbath* is often found in the plural form. For example, of the 68 times the word is used in the New Testament, 24 times we find it in the plural. In the Septuagint the word Sabbath is found 107 times— 80 times it being in the plural form.

However, both in the singular and in the plural, it is invariably translated as a singular “the Sabbath” (see 12:10-12, Luke 4:16, Colossians 2:16). The word Sabbath can also occur as a true plural (Acts 17:2).

The names of other Jewish Holidays are often plural in form but singular in meaning (i.e. Matthew 26:17 the feast of unleavened bread—the word *unleavened* is plural in Greek).

as the first day The next day would be regarded as ‘the first day of the week,’ namely, Sunday. All four gospels agree that it was on early Sunday morning a group of women went to the tomb of Jesus. In present-day usage, Monday is often regarded as ‘the first day of the week.’

of the week The word translated *week* is also the Greek word *Sabbath*. The word is also used in Greek as a period of seven days or a week (Luke 18:12, John 20:1). The form of the word here is also plural as is the case of “After the Sabbath.” Again we want to stress, the form is plural but the meaning is singular “week.”

was dawning, There are some commentators who see this group of women coming on Saturday night at the end of the Sabbath (McNeile, Gundry).

Mary Magdalene The women whom Jesus cast out seven demons.

and the other Mary The other Mary was the mother of James and Joseph.

went to look at the tomb. The fact that only women are mentioned shows that the story was not invented.

Matt. 28:2 And behold, a great earthquake had occurred; for the angel of the Lord descended out of heaven and came and rolled away the stone and was sitting upon it.

And behold, a great earthquake had occurred; This is possible the same earthquake that is recorded in 27:51,52. It is also possible that it is an aftershock of that earthquake. The fact that an earthquake occurred testifies to the divine significance of the event.

for the angel of the Lord descended out of heaven and came and rolled away the stone and was sitting upon it. Mark calls this individual a young man, Luke has two men, and John two angels. When the accounts are put together we find that there two angels at the tomb of Jesus whose appearance looked like that of young men.

Matt. 28:3 And his appearance was as lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Sinaiticus* does not have the phrase *And his appearance*.

And his appearance was as lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. The appearance of the angels matches similar appearances of angels at Jesus' birth.

Matt. 28:4 From the fear of him the ones guarding were shaken, and they became as dead men.

From the fear of him the ones guarding were shaken, and they became as dead men. The guard is terrified by the appearance of this angel.

Matt. 28:5 And the angel said to the women, "You stop being afraid, for I know that you are seeking Jesus, who was crucified.

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Sinaiticus* does not have the phrase *to the women*.

And the angel said to the women, "You stop being afraid, *You* is emphatic. These are the same words the angel spoke to Joseph (1:20). The soldiers had shown fear but it was not necessary for Jesus' disciples to be afraid.

for I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified one; They are looking for someone who has died.

Matt. 28:6 He is not here, for he has risen, just as he said. Come, see the place where he was laying.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts read *come see the place where the Lord was laying* rather than *come see the place where He was laying*.

He is not here, You have come to the wrong place. The only people here are dead!

for he has risen The greatest news humanity has ever received! The resurrection itself is never described in Scripture. Seemingly no one saw Jesus leave the tomb.

just as he said, These refer to the predictions that Matthew records (12:40; 16:21; 17:9,23; 26:32). These predictions should have been known by the Lord's followers. Luke adds, "And they remembered His words" (Luke 24)

come They were standing at a distance because of the presence of the guard.

see the place where he was laying. They are at the correct tomb but Jesus is not there any longer!

Matt. 28:7 And go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He is risen from the dead, and behold He will go before you into the Galilee; there you shall see him.' Behold I have told you.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts do not have the words *from the dead*.

And go quickly and tell his disciples, This shows that His disciples had not left Jerusalem. The angel would not have asked them to do something impossible. Therefore we know that they had not yet left for Galilee at this time.

'He is risen from the dead, Luke adds, "just as He said.

and behold Matthew's favorite word used again to get our attention.

he will go before you into the Galilee; Jesus predicted this meeting in Galilee (26:32).

there you shall see him.' Matthew emphasizes the Galilean appearances. From the other gospel writers we know that Jesus also appeared in Jerusalem. The fact that Jesus said He would rise upon the third day (Saturday night/Sunday) demands at least one appearance in Jerusalem. The disciples could not have traveled the sixty mile to Galilee by Sunday morning.

Behold I have told you. The angel emphasizes the message they are to give.

Matt. 28:8 And the women hurried away quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and they ran to tell to his disciples.

And the women hurried away quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, One could only imagine the emotions they were experiencing.

and they ran to tell to his disciples. The women obey the angelic command.

The Risen Christ (28:9,10)

Jesus meets the women returning from the tomb.

Matt. 28:9 And behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Greetings.” And they came, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him.

Note on a variant reading: After *behold* many manuscripts read *and as they were going away to announce to His disciples behold*.

And behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Greetings.” Jesus meets and greets them along the way.

And they came, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. They do the proper thing and worship Him.

Matt. 28:10 Then Jesus said to them, “Stop being afraid, go tell my brothers to go to the Galilee, and there they will see me.”

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Sinaiticus* does not have the word *My*.

Then Jesus said to them, “Stop being afraid, Though there is no explanation of their emotions they obviously were afraid when they saw Him.

go tell my brothers This is the only place in Matthew where Jesus call His disciples My brothers.

to go to the Galilee, This does not rule out the appearances in Jerusalem.

and there they will see me.” Jesus basically repeats the words of the angels

The Report of the Guards (28:11-15)

The guards tell the religious leader what happened.

Matt. 28:11 And while they were proceeding away, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all these things that had happened.

And while they were proceeding away, We now pick up the narrative of the guards.

some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all these things that had happened. They first tell the priests what happened.

Matt. 28:12 And after they gathered together with the elders, they took a large sum of money and agreed to give it to the soldiers.

And after they gathered together with the elders, they took a large sum of money and agreed to give it to the soldiers. First, they paid Judas to betray Him, now they pay the guards to lie about His resurrection.

Matt. 28:13 saying, “You must say, ‘His disciples came at night and stole his body while we were sleeping.’”

saying, “You must say, ‘His disciples came at night and stole his body while we were sleeping.’” A ridiculous assertion. How do you know that the body was stolen if you were sleeping? Why not a resurrection?

Matt. 28:14 And if this thing gets to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.”

And if this thing gets to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” They offer to defend them in front of the governor. Admitting they have fallen asleep on duty could have cost them their lives.

Matt. 28:15 And they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day.

And they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day. At the time Matthew wrote this gospel, this story was still the party line.

The Great Commission (28:16-20)

Jesus gives His disciples their final commission.

Matt. 28:16 And the eleven disciples went into the Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus directed them.

And the eleven disciples went into the Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus directed them. We now move several weeks from the resurrection. The eleven disciples obey and go to Galilee to meet Jesus. The significance of Galilee is that the gospel will go out to the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Matt. 28:17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. The word translated *doubted* has more the idea of hesitation. Exactly who doubted is open to question. It is possible that there were others present apart from the eleven.

Matt. 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them saying, “All authority in heaven and upon the earth has been given to me.

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Sinaiticus* does not have the words *to them*.

And Jesus came and spoke to them saying, “All authority in heaven and upon the earth has been given to me. Jesus can make the claim to all authority.

Matt. 28:19 therefore as you go, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and into the name of the Son, and into the name of the Holy Spirit,

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts do not have *therefore*.

therefore as you go He assumes that they will go into all of the world

make disciples of all the nations, This is a command, not a suggestion! They are to make disciples. This is the responsibility of the church.

baptizing them into the name of the Father, and into the name of the Son, and into the name of the Holy Spirit, These are three distinct persons. The Greek text makes it clear.

Matt. 28:20 teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you. And behold, I myself am with you always, even until the conclusion of the age.”

Note on a variant reading: At the end of the book some manuscripts have the word *amen*.

teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you. And behold, I myself am with you always, even until the conclusion of the age.” While the disciples go out and evangelize the world, Jesus has promised to be with them always (Hebrews 13:5).

Summary to Chapter 28

On Easter Sunday morning the women come to the tomb to finish the anointing of Jesus’ body only to find the stone removed, the guard fainted, and the seal broken. In addition, Jesus’ body is gone. An angel at the tomb informs them that He has risen from the dead—just as He said.

They are then instructed to tell His disciples that He will meet them in Galilee. On their way they meet the risen Christ who repeats the same message.

Meanwhile the guards come to the religious leaders and tell them what occurred. They are told to say they were asleep and that the disciples stole

The Gospel According To Matthew

His body. Matthew tells us that this story was still around at the time of the writing of His gospel.

Sometime later the meeting in Galilee occurs where Jesus delivers the Great Commission, they are to go into all the world and make disciples. The gospel ends with the promise of Jesus to be with them always.

About The Author

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Don is a best-selling and award-winning author having authored, or co-authored, over seventy books. This includes the best-selling *Answers to Tough Questions*, with Josh McDowell, as well as the award-winning book *Family Handbook of Christian Knowledge: The Bible*. His various writings have been translated into over thirty different languages and have sold over a million copies. His available books can be found on his website www.educatingourworld.com.

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