GOSPELS

ADVANCED
BIBLE
STUDY
SERIES

David W. Cloud

The Four Gospels

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PO Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061
866-295-4143 (toll free) - fbns@wayoflife.org
www.wayoflife.org

Canada:
Bethel Baptist Church
4212 Campbell St. N., London Ont. N6P 1A6
519-652-2619 (voice) - 519-652-0056 (fax)
info@bethelbaptist.ca

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Helpful Information

How the Advanced Bible Studies Series can be used

- *Private study for the individual Christian*
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- *Home schooling curriculum*
- *Study material in jails and prisons*
- *Discipling new Christians*
- *Refresher studies for Bible College graduates*
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- *Commentaries (e.g., Genesis, Romans, Hebrews, Revelation)*

In what order should the courses be studied?

The best place to start is with the course "How to Study the Bible." This teaches the principles of how to interpret the Bible and how to study it effectively by means of some of the most important Bible study tools. The 2014 edition of the course is enlarged and improved.

A briefer edition of this is *The Effectual Bible Student*, which is a 12-hour video course. The course, which is the product of 40 years of Bible study and teaching, has life-changing potential. It has four major sections: (1) The spiritual requirements for effectual Bible study, (2) tips for daily Bible study, (3) principles of Bible interpretation, and (4) how to use Bible study tools. It also deals with using Bible study software on a computer, a tablet, or a smartphone. It is a package consisting of the videos of the course and the textbook with review questions for testing. The course notes can be used as a standalone tool by teachers to teach church classes and home schooling programs or can be used for self-study. The package can be purchased as a set of DVDs and textbook, or it can be downloaded for free from www.wayoflife.org. See the Bible Study section of the *Articles Library* using the button at the top of the Way of Life home page.

The next course that we recommend is "Old Testament History and Geography," which gives an overview of the Bible and how that each part fits together within the

whole. The 2014 edition of this course is much enlarged and improved with new maps.

After this we recommend The Four Gospels, then Acts. Both of these have been enlarged and improved in recent years. The latest edition of the Four Gospels was published in January 2017 with new maps and PowerPoint presentations.

After that we suggest studying the courses in whatever order best fits your need and interest or that of your class.

The course titles of the Advanced Bible Studies Series are as follows:

Acts
Bible Version Issue
Defense of the Faith
1 Corinthians
Four Gospels
Genesis
Give Attendance to Doctrine
Hebrews
History of the Churches from a Baptist Perspective
History and Geography of the Old Testament
James
Job
New Testament Church
Pastoral Epistles
Proverbs
Psalms
Revelation
Romans
Understanding Bible Prophecy

Currently there are seven other Bible study courses published by Way of Life Literature which are not a part of the Advanced Bible Studies Series.

Bible Times & Ancient Kingdoms
Effectual Bible Student
Keeping the Kids: A course in child training and discipleship

One Year Discipleship Course
Sowing and Reaping: A Course in Evangelism
An Unshakeable Faith: A Course on Christian Apologetics
The Mobile Phone and the Christian Home and Church

About the Review Questions

A lot of time and effort has gone into the creation of the review questions which are designed to draw the student's attention to the most important points of the lessons and to help him remember these points after the course is finished. Each question deals with things that the Bible student needs to keep in mind beyond the life of the course. The review questions go over all of the important points in the lessons, thus pointing the student's attention to the most significant material.

The questions help to focus the student's attention on the things that he should take away from the course and helps him remember these things by providing a means by which he can easily go back to test himself.

If you take the courses by yourself, don't skip over the very important review questions. Find someone who will test you and let them present the review questions to you. It is a very important part of the learning process.

For the classroom setting, the teacher can use our review questions (plus his own, of course) to create appropriate sectional and final tests at the learning level desired.

Course plan for The Four Gospels

1. We cover the book of Matthew thoroughly, almost verse by verse. In this way we will also cover much of the material in Mark and Luke, as these three are called the Synoptic Gospels, meaning they present the same basic view. We will see more about this.

2. We cover John 14-17, which is Christ's ministry to the disciples between the Lord's Supper and Gethsemane.

3. We also examine other material in Mark, Luke, and John that is not contained in Matthew.

What's new in the 2017 edition of *The Four Gospels*?

The January 2017 edition of *The Four Gospels* is a major enlargement and refinement of the course. Following are the changes and improvements:

• The material has been greatly enlarged and completely revised throughout. Enlarged and major new studies include the Sermon on the Mount, Christ's teaching in John 13-17, and the evidence for Christ's resurrection.

• The review questions have been expanded.

• The old maps have been replaced with improved ones. We have chosen to license Manna Bible Maps plus selected ones from other sources, including some of our own. We are including a CD with all of the maps used in the course. Teachers and students are urged to purchase a complete set of Manna Bible Maps from www.BibleMaps.com.

• The 2017 edition of *The Four Gospels* is accompanied by 28 PowerPoint presentations containing 1,500 slides with professional photos, graphics, and video clips. These deal with Bible culture, Bible lands and geography, and Bible history.

The PowerPoint presentations are as follows:

- Bible Culture Battlement
- Bible Culture Camel
- Bible Culture Cosmetics, Fashion
- Bible Culture Cursed Fig Tree
- Bible Culture Ephah Cubit Gerah
- Bible Culture False Messiahs
- Bible Culture Fine Linen
- Bible Culture Fishing
- Bible Culture Herodian Lamp
- Bible Culture In the Gate
- Bible Culture Millstone
- Bible Culture Mustard Seed
- Bible Culture Olive and Olive Press
- Bible Culture Phylactery
- Bible Culture Pomegranate
- Bible Culture Pottery

- Bible Culture Scrolls
- Bible Culture Seals
- Bible Culture Sycomore Tree
- Bible Culture Synagogue
- Bible Culture Tombs
- Bible Culture Tribute Money
- Bible Culture Widow's Mite
- Christ's ministry on the Sea of Galilee
- Christ's Passion Week
- From Jerusalem to Jericho
- Herod's Temple and the Roman Era
- Israel's Geography

More PowerPoints like this are available in the *Bible Times & Ancient Kingdoms* course, available from Way of Life Literature. This is a package consisting of a book and a DVD with 24 PowerPoint presentations featuring more than 5,000 slides. The presentations are packed with high quality color photos, drawings, and video clips. It also features high quality historical recreations of Bible places and events that we have licensed. *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms* is a course on Bible geography, Bible culture, and Bible history. It has a two-fold objective: to present apologetic evidence for the Bible and to give background material to help the student better understand the setting of Bible history. We cover this fascinating history from Genesis to the New Testament, dealing with the Table of the Nations in Genesis 10, the Tower of Babel and Ancient Babylon, Ur of the Chaldees, Egypt, Baal worship, the Philistines, the Canaanites, David's palace, Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, Ahab and Jezebel, the fall of the northern kingdom, the Assyrian Empire, Hezekiah and his times, Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylon, the Medo-Persian Empire, Herod the Great and his temple, the Roman rule over Israel, life in the Roman Empire, and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. The course also deals with Bible culture, such as weights and measures, plant and animal life, Caesar's coin, the widow's mite, ancient scrolls and seals, phylacteries, cosmetics, tombs, and the operation of ancient lamps, millstones, pottery wheels, seals, and olive presses. *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms* begins with an overview of Israel's geography and a timeline of Bible history to give the student a framework for better understanding the material. Each section includes maps to help the student place the events in their proper

location. The course is packed with important but little-known facts that illuminate Bible history and culture.

Student Assignments

a. Each student is required to read the book of Matthew at least once during the course. Preferably, he should read all four of the Gospels.

b. As you read, have pen and paper at hand and write down any questions you have about the passages. These will be discussed as we deal with each section.

c. Find every instance of fulfilled prophecy in the Gospel of Matthew and list the fulfillment as well as the Old Testament prophecy.

For example:
Mt. 1:23 virgin birth (Isa. 7:14)
Mt. 2:5 born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)

Between the Testaments

1. The time span between Malachi and Matthew was about 400 years.

2. The Jews in Israel continued to prosper and have freedom under Persia and the Greeks until the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC.

3. After Alexander, the Greek empire was divided among four generals (eventually five). The one who ruled Egypt in the south, Ptolemy, took possession of Jerusalem in 320 BC.

See Map 01 - *Greece*.

4. The king of Syria also claimed Jerusalem, and for the next 100 years, these two nations struggled for its possession.

5. Finally, Antiochus Epiphanes became king of Syria and determined to conquer Palestine and destroy the Jewish religion. He captured Jerusalem and desecrated the temple with pigs and set up the Greek idol Zeus (Jupiter). Antiochus forced the Jewish priests to offer sacrifices to Zeus, and he burned all of the copies of the Scriptures that he could find. In this he was a forerunner of the end-time Antichrist, who will do much the same thing during the tribulation.

6. A priest named Mattathias with his five sons rebelled against Antiochus and were joined by many others. Their family name was Hasmonean, but they are more popularly known as the Maccabees.

a. After Mattathias died, his son Judas led the revolt. They drove Antiochus' army out of Jerusalem and cleansed the temple. They held onto Jerusalem until 161 BC, when a massive army from Syria defeated them and Judas was killed.

b. While the army was camped and relaxed, savoring their victory over the Jews, Jonathan, the youngest son of the Maccabees, rallied the defeated Jewish forces and coming suddenly and unexpectedly upon the Syrian camp, defeated them and drove them out of the land.

c. After the death of Judas, the oldest son of the Maccabees, Simon, ruled the Jewish nation. Then his son, John Hyrcanus, was made the leader. He ruled for 31 years.

d. By the time John's son, Aristobulus, became leader, the moral character of the Jewish nation had deteriorated. The third generation of the Maccabees did not have the spiritual zeal of their fathers.

7. In 65 BC, the Roman general Pompey conquered Jerusalem and made Israel a vassal of the Roman Empire.

See Map 02 - *Rome*.

8. Herod the Great rose to power soon after this and became the king of Judea in about 35 BC.

See the Powerpoint *"Herod's Temple and the Roman Era."*

a. Herod was the ruler of Judea at the birth of Christ (Mt. 2:1).

b. He was a great builder. He constructed splendid palaces and castles in Jerusalem, Masada, and other places. He made Caesarea Maritima on Israel's coast one of the most glorious of Roman cities, and created a natural harbor there that was one of the wonders of the ancient world.

c. To win the favor of the Jews, Herod expanded and glorified the temple that had been built when the Jews returned from Babylon. It became known as "Herod's Temple," and it is the temple that existed during Jesus' earthly ministry.

d. Herod was a very wicked and cruel king. "In thirty-six years hardly a day passed without someone being sentenced to death. Herod spared no one, neither his own family nor his closest friends, neither the priests nor least of all the people. On his list of victims stand the names of the two husbands of his sister Salome, his wife Mariamne and his sons Alexander and Aristobulus. He had his brother-in-law drowned in the Jordan and his mother-in-law Alexandra put out of the way. Two scholars who had torn down the golden Roman eagle from the gateway of the temple were burned alive. Hyrcanus, the last of the Hasmoneans, was killed. Noble families were exterminated root and branch. Many of the Pharisees were done away with. Five days before his death the old man had his son Antipater assassinated. And that is only a fraction of the crimes of this man who 'ruled like a wild beast'" (Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, p. 371).

e. Herod's greatest crime was his attempt to murder the infant Jesus by having all male children under two years of age put to death (Mt. 2). He died soon thereafter.

9. Herod the Great's son Herod Antipas ruled in his place.

a. This is the Herod that is mentioned in Luke 3:1 when John the Baptist began his ministry, and this is the Herod who beheaded John (Mt. 14:1-12).

b. This is the Herod who ruled at the time of Jesus' crucifixion (Lk. 23:6-12).

10. It was in the time between the Testaments that the Pharisees and Sadducees rose to power within the Jewish nation.

a. The Pharisees turned the law into a dead religion which focused on external ritual and works apart from faith and which exalted human tradition above the Scriptures.

b. The Sadducees were rationalists who did not believe in the resurrection or in angels (Acts 23:8); . They were influenced by Greek philosophy and "sought to mix a measure of Greek pleasure and vice with their worship of Jehovah" (William Hull, *The Fall and Rise of Israel*).

Introduction: The Four Gospels

"The Old Testament begins with man made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), while the New Testament begins with God made in the image of man (Joh. 1:14). The man made in the image of God was defeated by Satan in a fruitful garden (Gen. 2:8), while God made in the image of man defeated Satan in a barren desert (Mt. 4:1)" (H.L. Willmington).

1. The Gospels present Jesus Christ as the full revelation of God (Heb. 1:3). Christ is God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). The God who created the world and walked with Adam in the Garden of Eden became a man. The first thing we learn from the Gospels is what God is like, His character and ways. When we see Jesus, we see God. What a wonderful thing that God has so manifested Himself to sinful men, that we might know Him. "The incarnation, 'God with us,' shows the purpose of His heart, not only to have man with Him, but for Him to be with man. The Lord God walking amid the trees of the garden which His own hands had planted tells of the yearning of a heart which could not *rest content, were He not with His creatures" (Samuel Ridout, The Four Gospels*).

2. God became a man in order to save men (Lk. 19:10; 1 John 4:14).

3. Christ is the second Man, the last Adam, who fulfills God's eternal plan. This plan is that the Son of God will become the man that God intended from the beginning (perfectly righteous, loving the Father with all His being, delighting in God's will), that He would redeem sinners by His blood, and that He would rise from the dead as the Head of a new creation of men who are conformed to His image. The most succinct statement of God's eternal purpose is found in Ephesians 1:3-11. See also Ro. 8:28-30; 1 Co. 15:20-22, 45-49; Col. 1:12-20; Heb. 2:9-10.

4. The Gospels are written to give a four-fold portrait of Christ. "Taken together, they set forth, not a biography, but a Personality. ... the four Gospels, though designedly incomplete as a story, are divinely perfect as a revelation" (Scofield). The Gospels are like a musical quartet in which the four voices harmonize perfectly into one more beautiful one. The Gospels are like four photographs of an individual, each portrait adding another feature.

a. The emphasis of each individual Gospel:

Matthew - Christ as God's King

(1) Christ is presented as the "Son of David" (Mt. 1:1). He inherits David's throne and eternal kingdom.

(2) Matthew does not describe Christ's lowly birth but only the visit by the wise men (Mt. 2) and their offerings fit for a king.

(3) Matthew gives the entire Sermon on the Mount with the principles of the kingdom (Mt. 5-7).

(4) In Matthew, Christ presents Himself to Israel as the Messiah and is rejected. His rejection by the Jewish leaders is described as the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mt. 12:22-32).

(5) Only Matthew gives the kingdom parables that describe the kingdom in its mystery form in the church age (Mt. 13).

Mark - Christ as God's Servant

(1) No lineage is given in Mark, because a servant needs none and there is nothing about Christ's birth or early life.

(2) The keyword is "straightway," which is the language of a servant who is busy in his master's service. See Mk. 1:10, 18, 20, 21; 2:2, 3:6; 5:29; 6:25, 45, 54; 7:35; 8:10; 9:15, 20, 24; 11:3; 14:45; 15:1.

Luke - Christ as God's Perfect Man

(1) Christ's genealogy is traced back to Adam (Lk. 3:38). He is the last Adam, the second Man.

(2) Luke gives much more information about Christ's birth and early life than any other Gospel (Lk. 1-2).

(3) Luke has a worldwide view, presenting Christ as the Saviour of all of mankind (Lk. 2:10, 30-32; 3:6). Luke gives only one of the parables from Matthew 13, that being the Parable of the Sower (Lk. 8:4-15). This is the parable that emphasizes the sowing of the gospel throughout the world.

(4) Only Luke mentions the angel that strengthened Christ and the great drops of blood (Lk. 22:43-44). This emphasizes Jesus' humanity.

John - Christ as God's Son

(1) The purpose of John's Gospel is that we might know that Jesus is the Son of God (John 20:30-31).

(2) John begins with Christ as the eternal Son of God and contains the most powerful statements of Christ's deity (Joh. 1:1). John gives the I AM sayings of Jesus by which He claimed to be God (Ex. 3:14). The Jews knew that by calling Himself "I am," Jesus was claiming to be Jehovah God (Joh. 8:58-59). "I am the bread of life" (Joh. 6:48); "I am the light of the world" (Joh. 8:12; 9:5); "I am the door" (Joh. 10:9); "I am the good shepherd" (Joh. 10:11); "I am the resurrection and the life" (Joh. 11:25); "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (Joh. 14:6); "I am the true vine" (Joh. 15:1). John is the only Gospel that mentions the multitude falling down when Christ speaks "I am He" in Gethsemane (Joh. 18:6).

(3) John contains no genealogy, because the eternal Son of God has no beginning.

(4) John does not contain the more human aspects of Christ's incarnation. There is no manger, no boyhood, no baptism, no temptation.

(5) Only John contains Christ's high priestly prayer (Joh. 17).

(6) John is the only Gospel that does not mention Jesus' struggle in Gethsemane over "the cup" and His prayers to the Father in that regard.

b. The four-fold portrait of the Gospels shows Christ as the fulfillment of prophecy (Lk. 24:27).

Matthew - Zechariah 9:9 (King)
Mark - Isaiah 42:1 (Righteous Servant)
Luke - Isaiah 7:14 (Perfect Man)
John - Isaiah 9:6 (God)

c. This does not mean that each Gospel presents Christ ONLY in that particular light. "But not only so: for Matthew's King is also Servant, Man, and God; and Mark's Servant is also King, and Man, and God; Luke's Man is also King, and Servant, and God; and John's eternal Son is also King, and Servant, and Man" (Scofield).

5. The Gospels are further divided into two types: The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) and the Gospel of John.

a. Synoptic means summary or outline, and it refers to the fact that three of the Gospels present the same basic view of Jesus' life. The Synoptic Gospels deal more with the following:

(1) the external facts
(2) the human aspects
(3) the public discourse
(4) the Galilean ministry.

b. The Gospel of John deals more with the following:

(1) the internal facts
(2) the Divine aspects
(3) the private discourses
(4) the Judean ministry.

6. Two of the Gospels are particularly geared to different groups of people. Matthew is written especially for the Jews, while Luke is written especially for the Gentiles. (I have read that Matthew is for the Jews, Mark for the Greeks, Luke for the Romans, and John for the Church; but I believe that is less apparent than the clear distinction between Matthew and Luke.)

a. We see this in the accounts of Jesus' birth.

(1) Matthew begins by calling Jesus the Christ or Messiah and by tracing Jesus' genealogy back to Abraham and David (Mt. 1:1). The Jews were familiar with the Messianic prophecies and God's covenants with their forefathers.

(2) Luke begins with the declaration that Luke is giving a true eyewitness record of historic events (Lk. 1:1-4). This is an important introduction for Gentile readers who aren't as familiar with the Old Testament.

b. We see this difference in the miracles that are recorded.

(1) The first miracle in Matthew is the healing of the leper (Mt. 8:1-4), which has a special significance to the Jews. The leper was unclean and illustrated sin and God's judgment.

(2) The first miracle of Luke is the casting out of a demon (Lk. 4:33-36). The pagan nations were very interested in demonology. Many aspects of pagan religion are an attempt to overcome demons.

c. We see this difference in Christ's sermon against the Pharisees.

(1) Matthew 23:23 says the Pharisees had "omitted the weightier matters of the law..." The Jews were familiar with the law of Moses.

(2) Luke 11:42 quotes another situation in which Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, and He says that they "pass over judgment and the love of God." This could be understood even by the Gentiles who did not know the law of Moses.

d. We see this difference in the terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God."

(1) Matthew uses "kingdom of heaven" 32 times and "kingdom of God" only five times. The term "kingdom of heaven" is particularly related to the promised Messianic kingdom as prophesied in Daniel 2:44; 7:13. Twenty-one times in the Old Testament God is called the "God of heaven."

(2) Luke uses "kingdom of God" 32 times and never uses "kingdom of heaven," because the Gentiles would not understand that term. They would understand, though, that Luke is saying there is only one God and that He has determined to establish His kingdom on earth.

7. Since the Gospels are not written to give a systematic record of Christ's earthly life, it is not easy to place all of the events in a perfect timeline. Gospel harmonies are interesting and profitable, but there are questions that cannot be answered with certainty. In some cases, we cannot be absolutely certain of the order of events. When the Bible does not answer a particular question, it means that the question doesn't need to be answered today. See Deu. 29:29.

8. The Gospels are the product of divine inspiration (Joh. 14:26; 16:13-15). This means that the number of the Gospels was established by the Holy Spirit. The Canon of Scripture was settled by the Spirit, not by man! It means, also, that the words of the Gospels were given by the Holy Spirit. They might or might not have used secondary sources, but they certainly did not depend upon secondary sources or their own faulty memories.

The following section is duplicated in the ABSS course *Give Attendance to Doctrine*. It can be skipped if the teacher and/or student want to go directly to the studies in the Life of Christ.

The unbelieving attack of form criticism. Form criticism or redaction criticism are modernistic theories about the formation of the Gospels.

a. Some aspects of form criticism are as follows:

(1) The gospel writers supposedly used *a common oral tradition* that was passed around among the Christians for some time before anything was written down. Textual critics Alford (1849) and Westcott (1860) promoted this view. Theological modernists commonly believe that the gospel story was passed along for some time in oral form before it was written down.

(2) The gospel writers supposedly *used other sources*. One supposed source is the "Q" document, which does not exist but many false teachers believe this mythical writing was the source of some or all of the four gospels.

(3) The gospel writers supposedly *copied from one another*. One theory is that *Matthew was first written* and Mark and Luke were then based on Matthew. This was the view of textual critics Griesbach (1783) and Hug (1808). It is the official position of the Roman Catholic Church (decreed by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1912). Another theory is that *Mark was first written* and that Matthew and Luke are based on Mark plus the mythical Q document. There are endless permeations of these theories. Each prominent form critic strives to make a name for himself by inventing a new twist to this approach.

(4) The gospel writers supposedly *modified things that Jesus did and said*. They added to, subtracted from, and contracted, and otherwise changed the account.

b. Evangelicals and form criticism. It is not only out-and-out modernists who are entertaining unscriptural views of the Gospels.

(1) The following amazing statement from *The Jesus Crisis: The Inroads of Historical Criticism into Evangelical Scholarship* by Robert L. Thomas and F. David Farnell (Kregel, 1998) reveals how deeply evangelicals have been infected with the modernistic thinking of form criticism: "Outspoken evangelical critics have engaged in the same type of dehistoricizing activity

as the Jesus Seminar people with whom they differ. If they were to organize among themselves their own evangelical 'Jesus Seminar,' the following is a sampling of the issues they would vote on, most of which they would probably pass:

- The author of Matthew, not Jesus, created the Sermon on the Mount.

- The commissioning of the Twelve in Matthew 10 is a group of instructions compiled and organized by the author of the first gospel, not spoken by Jesus on a single occasion.

- The parable accounts of Matthew 13 and Mark 4 are anthologies of parables that Jesus uttered on separate occasions.

- Jesus did not preach the Olivet Discourse in its entirety, as found in three of the gospel accounts.

- Jesus gave His teaching on divorce and remarriage without the exception clauses found in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9.

- In Matthew 19:16-17, the writer changed the words of Jesus and the rich man either to obtain a different emphasis or to avoid a theological problem involved in the wording of Mark's and Luke's accounts of the same event.

- The scribes and Pharisees were in reality decent people whom Matthew painted in an entirely negative light because of his personal bias against them.

- The genealogies of Jesus in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 are figures of speech and not accurate records of Jesus' physical and/or legal lineage.

- The magi who, according to Matthew 2, visited the child Jesus after His birth are fictional, not real, characters.

- Jesus uttered only three or four of the eight or nine beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12.

"Recognizably, the listed conclusions impinge upon the historical accuracy of the gospel records. Various evangelicals have opted for the stated unhistorical choice in each of the suggested instances. Granted, their reduction of historical precision in the Gospels is not the wholesale repudiation of historical data as is that of the original Jesus Seminar, but that it is a repudiation is undeniable. An acceptance of imprecision is even more

noticeable in light of the fact that the above questions are only the tip of the iceberg. An exhaustive list would reach staggering proportions" (Robert L. Thomas and F. David Farnell, *The Jesus Crisis*, pp. 14-15).

(2) An example of the teaching of form criticism among evangelicals is found in a report posted to the Internet by Dr. Daniel B. Wallace, Associate Professor of New Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary. In a 35-page report entitled "The Synoptic Problem," Wallace supports the redaction approach to the Gospels, that the Gospels were produced by copying material from secondary sources. Wallace's report is largely a review of Robert H. Stein's "The Synoptic Problem: An Introduction." (The 63-year-old Stein is a professor at the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.) Wallace says: "Indeed, I have found Stein's book so helpful a synthesis of the issues involved, that to some degree our comments here will be merely a distillation of his work." Note carefully the following excerpts from Wallace's report:

"It is quite impossible to hold that the three synoptic gospels were completely independent from each other. In the least, they had to have shared a common oral tradition. But the vast bulk of NT scholars today would argue for much more than that" ("The Synoptic Problem," p. 1).

"We shall see later that before the Gospels were written there did exist a period in which the gospel materials were passed on orally, and it is clear that this oral tradition influenced not only the first of our synoptic Gospels but the subsequent ones as well" ("The Synoptic Problem," p. 4).

"The majority of NT scholars hold to Markan priority [Mark was written first and then Matthew and Luke based their gospels upon it] (either the two-source hypothesis of Holtzmann or the four-source hypothesis of Streeter). This is the view adopted in this paper as well" ("The Synoptic Problem," p. 6).

"One argument concerning Mark's harder readings which has been (as far as I can tell) completely overlooked is the probability that neither Luke nor Matthew had pristine copies of Mark at their disposal. ... An intermediate scribe is probably responsible—either intentionally or unintentionally—for more than a few of the changes which ended up in Luke and Matthew" ("The Synoptic Problem," footnote 49).

"Matthew and Luke have in common about 235 verses not found in Mark. ... Only two viable reasons for such parallels can be given: either one gospel writer knew and used the gospel of the other, or both used a common source" ("The Synoptic Problem," p. 19).

(3) Another example of the evangelical use of form criticism is *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Zondervan, 1992) by D.A. Carson, Douglas Moo, and Leon Morris. When discussing the origin of the Gospels, these men make NO MENTION OF DIVINE INSPIRATION and instead buy into the unbelieving theories of form criticism. Consider this statement: "Moreover, many of the assumptions on which form criticism is based appear to be valid: there was indeed a period of mainly oral transmission of the gospel materials; much of it was probably in small units; there probably was a tendency for this material to take on certain standard forms; and the early church has undoubtedly influenced the way in which this material was handed down. Defined narrowly in this way, there is undoubtedly a place for form criticism in the study of the Gospels" (*An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 23, 24). In fact, there is no scriptural validity for any of these assumptions, and all of them fly in the face of divine inspiration. To say that the "early church has undoubtedly influenced the way in which this material was handed down" is a plain rejection of the doctrine of divine inspiration. Either the Gospels were written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit or they were written by natural processes. There can be no middle ground for a believer.

c. We reject form criticism for the following reasons:

(1) Form criticism is contrary to divine inspiration. The crux of this matter is divine inspiration. Either the Gospels are infallible Scripture, or they are the fallible work of men. There is no middle ground here, and we have no difficulty whatsoever in rejecting all form criticism theories (AND those who hold such theories) and accepting the Bible's testimony about itself in simple faith.

The Lord Jesus Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would guide the disciples into all truth and would remind them of past events (Joh. 14:26; 16:13-15). Further, the Gospels are Scripture (compare 1 Tim. 5:18 and Mt. 10:10; also see Heb. 2:3), which means they are given by divine inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16). Nothing in the Scripture is there by happenstance or because of

man's will (2 Pet. 1:21). Even Paul, though he was not an eyewitness of the events of Christ's life, when writing about those things, was taught directly by the resurrected Christ (1 Co. 11:23).

Thus, the apostles were not dependent upon their own fallible memories in recording the Gospel accounts. They were not dependent upon their own thinking to select which material to present and how to present it. They did not copy from one another. They did not need secondary sources. They wrote by inspiration of God. The Holy Spirit guided each Gospel writer to portray Christ in a special way via the manner in which the material is presented, and to have done such a thing by natural means would have been impossible.

To make room for form criticism, D.A. Carson and his fellow New Evangelical authors of *An Introduction to the New Testament* reject the verbal inspiration of the Gospels and replace it with a more vague "voice inspiration." They say, "But their failure to preserve the *ipsissima verba Jesu* (the authentic words of Jesus) does not mean that they have tampered with the *ipsisima vox Jesu* (the authentic voice of Jesus)" (p. 44). This is the old modernistic argument that the Gospels give a semblance of what Christ said rather than His actual words. And it is a repetition of the modernistic mumbo-jumbo that the Bible is authoritative even though it is not verbally inerrant and infallible.

(2) The Gospels are miraculous upon their very face. They contain not merely eyewitness accounts that could have been produced by men, but many things that could not have been produced by even the most astute human observer. They describe the thoughts and motives of men's hearts, for example. How can that be accounted for on any naturalistic basis? The disciples could hear what Jesus said and see what He did, but they could not reach into His very mind to see, for instance, that He knew the thoughts of men's hearts (i.e., Lk. 5:22; 6:8; 9:47; 11:17). And they could not discern the actual motives of men such as Pilate (i.e., Mk. 15:15). Only God the Holy Spirit could have produced the Gospels. We believe that it is an act of unbelief to look for any other explanation.

(3) If form criticism were true, we would never know for sure what part of the Gospels contains the fallible words of men and what part contains the infallible Word of God. If, as Dallas Seminary professor Daniel Wallace

implies, there was a mysterious "Q" document from which some of the Gospel writers drew their information, it will never be known because no such document exists. Dr. Wallace admits that there are dozens of theories within the broad scope of redactionism or form criticism. If redaction theories of the Gospels are true, we are left with endless theorizing rather than established and settled truth.

(4) The theories of form criticism are contrary even to common sense. To think that Matthew and John, who were apostles and who were intimate eyewitnesses to the Gospel accounts, would depend upon Mark or Luke, who were not eyewitnesses, or upon any other human source such as a "Q" document, makes no sense.

(5) If form criticism were true, it would mean that there are errors in the Bible. Even the evangelicals themselves who are dabbling in form criticism reach this conclusion. And if there are errors in the Bible, Jesus was wrong when He stated that the Scripture cannot be broken (Joh. 10:35).

(6) Form criticism does not edify the flock; it entertains scholars. Only someone trained in the finer nuances of modern textual criticism could even understand the reports written by redaction scholars. Ordinarily they do not contain one word of doctrine, reproof, correction, or instruction in righteousness, yet those are the very purposes for which the Holy Scripture was given (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

(7) The alleged contradictions and problems within the Gospels that are raised by those who promote form criticism have been answered satisfactorily without resorting to redaction theories.

For one thing, form criticism ignores the traditional approach to the Gospels, which says the Holy Spirit gave a supernatural four-fold portrait of Christ and that the material in each Gospel was divinely selected from the events of Christ's life to contribute to the individual portrait.

Form criticism also ignores the traditional approach to explaining the apparent contradictions when comparing parallel accounts in the Gospels. Evangelicals who follow form criticism claim that the only satisfactory answer to these apparent contradictions is some sort of redaction view of the writing of the Gospels. D.A. Carson and his co-authors state, "Only a theory that includes as a major component literary interdependence among the

Synoptic Gospels is capable of explaining the data" (*An Introduction to the New Testament,* p. 29). And Daniel Wallace says, "When one compares the synoptic materials with John's Gospel, why are there so few verbal similarities? On an independent hypothesis, either John or the synoptics are wrong, or else John does not record the same events at all in the life of Jesus." In fact, the differences and apparent contradictions between the Gospels have been analyzed carefully by men of God through the centuries and satisfactory answers have been given without resorting to fanciful textual criticism. I have a large library of books dealing with the apparent contradictions in the Bible, including many volumes from the 18th and 19th centuries. The problems raised by redaction critics have been answered to the satisfaction of many godly minds. Many of the "problems" in the Gospels are dealt with in our book *Things Hard to Be Understood*.

And though we cannot answer every problem that arises when comparing parallel passages in the Gospels, the solution for a believer is not to give up the doctrine of verbal inspiration or to think that the Gospels do not give us a verbally accurate transmission of Christ's actual words and deeds. The solution is to walk by faith, not by sight, for "without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11:6).

(8) Form criticism focuses on the *method* of inspiration rather than the *product*. We know that there is a human element in the Scripture in the sense that men wrote the Bible, but the Bible itself doesn't focus on the human element. We are given brief glimpses of some of the mechanics of the giving of Scripture, such as God speaking face to face with Moses and angels speaking to some of the prophets, but for the most part we do not know the mechanics of inspiration, and we are not instructed to concern ourselves with it. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deu. 29:29). The essential fact is that "ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God." That is all we need to know, and it is a fact that can be accepted ONLY by faith. It can never be proven or even understood by scholarship. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

(9) Form criticism is of the devil. It is the devil who loves to cast doubt upon the Word of God. He has been doing this since his conversation with Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1). He is doing it today through "evangelical" scholars who are trained at the feet of modernists (either directly or through their writings or through other evangelical scholars who sat under modernists). This is the root problem with men such as Daniel Wallace and Robert Stein and D.A. Carson. They are leaning on the work of modernists, and they are trying to impress those same modernists that they, though "evangelicals," are serious scholars. They are trying to adapt the scholarship of unbelievers to a position of faith, and it is an impossible task. Does God not warn that "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Co. 15:33)? Does God not warn the believer not to sit in the seat of the scornful (Psalm 1:1)? Does God not warn that the words of false teachers eat like a canker and increase ungodliness and overthrow faith (2 Tim. 2:16-18)? Does God not warn that the words of false teachers deceive hearts (Ro. 16:17-18)? The Bible says that two cannot walk together except they be agreed (Amos 3:3), yet today's "evangelical" scholar is convinced that he can walk together for months and years on end with unbelievers and not be harmed spiritually. It is a delusion.

9. To understand the Gospels, the student must understand the Old Testament (Lk. 24:44-45).

10. Following are some of the principles for interpreting difficulties in the Gospels. (For more about Bible interpretation, see the Advanced Bible Studies Course *How to Study the Bible,* available from Way of Life Literature.)

a. The Lord Jesus Christ preached and ministered for three years, and doubtless He repeated things on different occasions, sometimes using different expressions.

(1) For example, if we compare Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6:17-49, we see that He preached some of the same things in these two sermons, and though some commentators have said that they are the same sermon, there is reason to believe they are different. They were preached in different places and on different occasions. Matthew 5:1 says He was "in a mountain," whereas Luke 6:17 says He was "in a plain." The sermon in Matthew 5-7 was preached before Christ called his 12 disciples, which didn't occur until Matthew 10;

whereas the sermon in Luke 6:17-49 was preached following the call of the disciples (see Lk. 6:13-16).

(2) Christ's sermon to the Pharisees in Matthew 23 was delivered to "the multitude" (Mt. 23:1), but He said some of the same things on at least one other occasion, when He was in the home of a Pharisee (Luke 11:37-54).

(3) If a preacher gives the same illustration repeatedly, it is common for him to vary the way he says it. If his sermons are recorded and transcribed, no two accounts of the same illustration would be word for word the same. This explains many of the apparent discrepancies in the Gospels. Compare Mt. 10:29 and Lk. 12:6, for example.

b. The Gospels often give complementary information about the same account. For example, all four Gospels mention the sign that Pilate put on the cross, but none of them give the entire message that was inscribed on it.

"This is Jesus the King of the Jews" Mt. 27:37
"The King of the Jews" Mk. 15:26
"This is the King of the Jews" Lk. 23:38
"Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews" Joh. 19:19

By comparing the accounts, we see that the complete title on the sign was "This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

c. We must understand that the four Gospels were not written to give an exact timeline of Jesus' life. They were written to give a four-fold portrait of Christ, and the timeline is sometimes jumbled to suit this objective. For this reason, it is not possible to resolve every difficulty pertaining to harmonizing the events of Christ's life.

d. We must understand that Jesus lived under the law (Gal. 4:4). This means that we do not follow everything Jesus did. An example is the sabbath. Christ kept the sabbath as a Jew under the law. For the New Testament believer, the sabbath is done away (Col. 2:16).

e. We must understand that Jesus "emptied" Himself during His incarnation. He was God but He willingly limited Himself in certain ways (Phil. 2:5-8).

(1) The Greek word "kenoo," which is translated "made himself of no reputation," is also translated "made of none effect" (1 Co. 1:17), "made void" (Ro. 4:14), and "in vain" (1 Co. 15:10).

(2) This explains why Jesus said things such as that He did not know the day and hour of His return (Mark 13:32).

11. The earthly life of Christ was 33 or 34 years.

a. He began his public ministry at age 30 (Lk. 3:23).

b. John's Gospel mentions three passovers (Joh. 2:13; 6:4; 11:55). Some think the unnamed feast mentioned in John 5:1 was a passover, but this cannot be proven.

c. Thus, Christ's earthly ministry was at least three years. Johnston Cheney, author of *The Life of Christ in Stereo*, believes the time was four years, because "the traditional three-year chronology compresses too many events into the last six months of His ministry" (p. 26).

12. There were many false gospels written about Jesus.

a. These included the *Shepherd of Hermas* (fanciful visions of a female angel), the Gospel of Peter (written by docetic heretics who denied the reality of Jesus' human body), the *Gospel of Thomas* (contains fanciful accounts of Jesus' childhood, depicting him as a mischievous child who performed petty and destructive miracles, even causing the death of another child), and the *Gospel of Judas* (which portrays Judas in a positive light). Many other false gospels are mentioned in the writings of Eusebius and others but which have not survived, including the *Gospel of Eve*, *Gospel of Bartholomew*, *Gospel of Basilides*, *Gospel of Hesychius*, *Gospel of Apollos*, *Gospel of Cerinthus*, *Gospel of Marcion*, *Gospel of Philemon*, *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, *Gospel of the Egyptians*, and *Gospel of the Nazarenes*. We know that the child Jesus was not mischievous or harmful. He only did that which pleased the Father (Isa. 42:1; Mt. 3:17; 17:5).

b. False gospels continue to be written. *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* claims that Jesus went into Egypt during his youth and learned how to be "the Christ." *Jesus Lived in India* alleges that Christ learned from the religious masters there.

c. In the Gospels we have everything God wants us to know about Jesus' life (Joh. 16:13).

13. There is much that we do not know about the life of Christ, and it is vain to speculate about that which is not revealed (Deu. 29:29). John said that if everything Jesus did were written down in books the world couldn't hold them (Joh. 21:25).

Introduction to Matthew

1. The author is the apostle Matthew.

   a. He was a tax collector before Christ called him. Compare Mt. 9:9 and 10:3. The term "publican" refers to a tax collector. They were hated by the Jews because they took taxes for the Roman government. They were usually dishonest and demanded more money than they should.

   b. Matthew's name was also Levi the son of Alphaeus (Mk. 2:14).

2. The book was written in about AD 37, shortly after Christ's ascension.

3. The purpose of the book is to show Jesus as the Messiah, the King of the Jews, the promised Son of David (Mt. 1:1).

A Simple Outline

I. Jesus is manifested to Israel and rejected (Mt. 1-26).

II. Jesus is crucified and buried (Mt. 27).

III. Jesus is risen with all authority and sends His disciples into all the world (Mt. 28).

The Presentation and Rejection of Jesus as the Christ

In the Gospels, Jesus first comes to "his own" (Joh. 1:11), the people of Israel, presenting Himself as the Christ or the Messiah, and is rejected.

We see the transition clearly in the Gospel of Matthew, which is the Gospel that presents Jesus most clearly as the Messiah King.

In chapter 1, Jesus' genealogy is traced to David to identify Him as the Messiah (Mt. 1:1). David was promised a Son who would sit on his throne forever (2 Sam. 7:12-13). Isaiah identified David's Seed as the Messiah (Isa. 9:6-7).

In chapter 3, John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Messiah (Mt. 3:1-3, 13-17).

In chapter 4, Jesus begins His public ministry, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and performing miracles to prove His Messiahship (Mt. 4:23-25). Compare Isa. 35:5-6, which prophesies that the Christ will do such miracles.

In chapters 5-7, Jesus preaches the principles of the coming kingdom ("the kingdom of heaven," Mt. 5:1, 10).

In chapters 8-9, He continues to perform great miracles to prove He is the Messiah (Mt. 9:35). Compare John 5:36.

In chapter 10, He sends out the 12 apostles to announce the kingdom and to perform miracles to demonstrate kingdom power (Mt. 10:1, 7).

In chapter 11, He reproves the cities of Israel for rejecting Him (Mt. 11:20-24). He begins to turn to the whole world (Mt. 11:28-30), whereas before He had restricted His preaching to the Jews (Mt. 10:6-7).

In Matthew 12, Jesus mentions the Gentiles for the first time, right after the Pharisees meet to plan His death (Mt. 12:14-21). He is also rejected by the Jewish leaders as demon possessed (Mt. 12:22-24). This was after Jesus performed exactly the type of miracle prophesied by Isaiah (Isa. 35:5-6).

In Matthew 13, Jesus begins to hide the truth from Israel (Mt. 13:10-16). He is also rejected by His home town Nazareth and his own family (Mt. 13:53-57).

In Matthew 14, John the Baptist is put to death (Mt. 14:1-10). This was not only a private sin by Herod, it was a sin committed by the chief leader of Israel. It was a rejection of John's testimony about Jesus. All of this was prophesied in Scripture (John 12:37-40).

In Matthew 15, Christ goes out of Israel for the first and only time and saves the Canaanite woman (Mt. 15:21-28).

In Matthew 16, Jesus mentions the church for the first time (Mt. 16:18). He also begins to teach about His coming death (Mt. 16:21).

In Matthew 21, Jesus presents Himself to Jerusalem as the Messiah according to Zechariah's prophecy (Mt. 21:1-5; Zec. 9:9). But He is received only as a prophet by the people (Mt. 21:11) and is arrested and crucified by the rulers.

In Matthew 22, Christ gives the Parable of the Marriage Feast which describes the preaching of the gospel to all men (Mt. 22:9).

In Matthew 23, Christ rebukes the Pharisees, Israel's religious leaders. He weeps over Jerusalem and prophesies that Israel will not see Him again until she repents (Mt. 23:37-39).

In Matthew 24-25, Christ gives prophecies of the end of the age. He describes the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom during the Tribulation when God will again focus His attention on the Jews and bring them to repentance.

In Matthew 26 Christ establishes the Lord's Supper for the churches.

In Matthew 26-27 Christ is arrested and crucified by the Jewish leaders and the Roman governor.

In Matthew 28 Christ rises from the dead and instructs the disciples to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth (Mt. 28:18-20).

Christ's pre-existence (John 1)

He is the eternal God (John 1:1). He was with God and was God. That is the mystery of the Trinity. Christ has no beginning. He created all things, but He was not created.

He made all things (John 1:3). He is the Creator God of Genesis 1.

He is life and the source of life (John 1:4). He is the author of every soul, every breath, every form of life. No life exists apart from Christ.

He is the source of all light and spiritual wisdom (John 1:9). The Son of God has always been the light of men even before His incarnation. We see Him personified as Wisdom in Proverbs 8:14-16. It is Christ who gives wisdom unto the wise and knowledge to them that know understanding (Dan. 2:20-21).

He is the Son of God who dwells in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18). We take this to mean that the Son is at the center of the Father's love and affection. He bears the tenderest relationship to and fellowship with the Father. The Son has intimate and perfect knowledge of the infinite Father, which means that the Son is "fully" God. Compare Matthew 11:27.

Matthew 1 Genealogy and Announcement of Christ's Birth

Christ's Genealogy (Mt. 1:1-17)

1. Jesus is presented by His main two names and titles (Mt. 1:1)

a. "Jesus" means Saviour.

b. "Christ" means the anointed of God and refers to the One promised in the Old Testament (Psalm 2:2; Dan. 9:25). "Christ" is the Greek word for the Hebrew word "Messiah" (Joh. 1:41).

2. Christ is presented as the fulfillment of the covenants with Abraham and David (Mt. 1:1).

a. To *Abraham*, God promised a nation and a land (Gen. 12:1-3, 7).

b. To *David*, God promised an eternal throne and kingdom (2 Sam. 7:16-17).

3. In Matthew and Luke we have two different genealogies.

The Old Testament genealogies trace the lineage of Jesus Christ. That is their chief purpose.

a. **In Matthew**, Christ's genealogy is traced through David's son Solomon (Mt. 1:12) to Jesus' legal stepfather Joseph via the cursed lineage of Jechonias (also called Jehoiachin and Coniah) (Jer. 22:24-30 - *Coniah* is Jechonias, the son of Jehoiakim: compare Jer. 22:24 and 2 Ki. 24:6). Had Jesus not been born of a virgin, He could not have inherited David's throne, because His step-father Joseph was of a cursed lineage.

b. Instead, Jesus inherited David's throne via Mary's lineage, as recorded in **Luke 3:23-38**. In that genealogy, Christ's lineage is traced through David's son Nathan to Mary's father Heli (Lk. 3:23) which bypasses the cursed Jehoiachin. We therefore see the importance of the virgin birth from another angle. (Matthew 1:16 says Joseph's father was Jacob, whereas Luke 3:23 says his father was Heli. Jacob was his actual father, and Heli was his father-in-law, Mary's father.)

4. Christ came through sinful men but He had no sin. This is because of His virgin birth and the fact that Adam was not his father. In His lineage are the following:

a. The children of an illicit relation (Tamar bore children by her father-in-law Judas Mt. 1:3; compare Gen. 38:25-30)

b. A harlot (Mt. 1:5 "Rachab" is the Rahab of Josh 6:25)

c. A despised Moabite (Ruth of Mt. 1:5; compare Ruth 1:4)

d. All the rest are "common" sinners (Ro. 3:23a).

The announcement of Christ's birth (Mt. 1:18-25)

1. The announcement was made in Nazareth (Lk. 1:26-27).

See Map 05 - *Birth of Christ.*

2. The emphasis here is upon the virginity of Mary. Seven times the passage emphasizes Christ's virgin birth.

a. The word "begat" is used throughout the genealogy, except for verse 16, where the term "of whom" is used of Christ's birth. "Of whom" is feminine in the Greek, indicating that Christ came of Mary, not Joseph, thus referring to the virgin birth.

b. "before they came together" (Mt. 1:18)

c. "she was found of child *of the Holy Ghost*" (Mt. 1:18)

d. "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Mt. 1:20)

e. "she shall bring forth a son" (Mt. 1:21); contrast the statement to Zacharias in Lk. 1:13 pertaining to John's birth - "she shall *bear thee* a son."

f. "a virgin shall conceive" (Mt. 1:23)

g. "knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son" (Mt. 1:25)

3. Christ's birth and life is the fulfillment of prophecy (Mt. 1:22). This is true of no other man who has ever lived. The Dead Sea Scrolls, dating to 100 to 200 BC, prove irrefutably that the Messianic prophecies in Psalms, Isaiah, and elsewhere in the Old Testament were written before Jesus' birth.

4. The angel said that Jesus would be both God and man in one Person (Mt. 1:23).

5. Both Mary and Joseph were obedient to the Lord (Mt. 1:24). This was a very difficult situation, and most people looking on would have misunderstood what was happening. This reminds us that we must obey and serve the Lord no matter what people think.

Matthew 2 Birth of Christ

The Birth of Christ

See Map 05 - *Birth of Christ.*

1. The wise men (Mt. 2:1-12)

a. Who were they, where did they come from, and how many of them were there?

(1) We only know that they were wise men and that they were from east of Israel. It could have been Persia, but the fact that they took roughly two years to reach Israel (compare verses 7 and 16), leads us to think that they were from even farther east, from India or beyond. Other than the time element, we cannot be sure.

(2) The Greek word translated "wise men" is "magi." Strong says it means "a Magian, i.e. Oriental scientist." The same word is translated "sorcerer" (Acts 13:8), referring to Elymus. This does not mean that the men were magicians, though. The King James translators refused to translate the term the same as they did in Acts, because the context of Matthew explains that these were not mere magicians or sorcerers. Even if they had been magicians in the past, it is obvious that they had laid that aside for the worship of the true and living God and to follow His holy guidance.

(3) Balaam is referred to as from "the mountains of the east" (Num. 23:7), and he prophesied of the Messiah as "the star out of Jacob" (Num. 24:17).

(4) We do not know how many wise men there were. Three is the traditional number, perhaps derived from the fact that they brought three presents (Mt. 2:11).

b. The wise men's offerings (Mt. 2:11)--the gold, frankincense, and myrrh--were gifts that honored Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Gold. Jesus is King. The gold is fit for a king and in the tabernacle the gold objects, such as the incense altar, denoted deity.

Frankincense. Jesus is Priest. The frankincense was associated with the priestly worship of God (Lev. 2:2, 16).

Myrrh. Jesus is Saviour. The myrrh is associated with Christ's death (Mk. 15:23; Joh. 19:39-40). "The process of obtaining myrrh suggests suffering, for the skin or bark of the plant is pierced so that the plant will 'bleed' a white gum which turns red on contact with the air" (*The Victor Journey Through the Bible)*.

c. Misc. lessons about the wise men

(1) The visit by the wealthy wise men reminds us that though God has chosen the poor and weak especially rich in faith, the wise and mighty can also be saved if they will humble themselves. Christ said that it is more difficult for the rich to be saved, but it is possible by God's power and grace (Mt. 19:24-26).

(2) While some Gentiles journeyed hundreds of miles to worship the young Christ child, the Jewish leaders were so apostate that they did not care enough even to travel seven miles (the distance from Jerusalem to Bethlehem).

(3) It is not enough to know the Bible; one must obey it. The Jewish leaders knew where Christ would be born and even knew when (Daniel 9), but they refused to act upon this knowledge.

(4) Bible prophecy is to be interpreted literally. They knew Jesus would be born in Bethlehem because that is literally what the prophecy said (Mic. 5:2).

2. Is there a contradiction between the accounts in Matthew and Luke? Matthew says that the young Jesus was taken into Egypt following the visit of the wise men and only after that was He taken to Nazareth, while Luke indicates Jesus was brought to Nazareth after the purification and nothing is said about Egypt.

Answer: There is no contradiction. The fact that the Gospel writers did not give a systematic account of Christ's life simply makes it difficult to create a precise timeline.

a. Luke does not say that Jesus *did not* go to Egypt; the Holy Spirit merely omits this from Luke's account as not being relevant to his purpose. Though it is not mentioned, that does not mean it did not happen.

b. By comparing the two accounts, we can see that the actual timeline of Jesus' early years was one of the following:

Timeline Possibility #1: The wise men did not find Jesus in Bethlehem but in Nazareth. Matthew does not actually say that they found Him in Bethlehem but that they were told that He would be born there. Assuming that this is true, the following would be the timeline:

(1) Jesus was born in the manger in Bethlehem (Lk. 2:7). The manger was where animals were fed. Sometimes it was hollowed out of a ledge that was built into the end of an animal stall and sometimes it was a free standing crib made of stone or wood. The mangers found at Megiddo dating to Solomon's time are made of stone.

See the Powerpoint *Bible Culture: Ephah, Manger, Cubit, Gerah.*

(2) Jesus was taken to the temple to be presented to the Lord (Lk. 2:22-24).

This was after Jesus was 41 days old (compare Lev. 12:1-3).

As the firstborn, Jesus had to be redeemed (Lk. 2:22-23; Num. 18:16). In Himself, He had no sin, but as with His baptism, He fulfilled all righteousness in our place.

Mary had to present a purification offering. The fact that she offered pigeons showed that she was poor (Lev. 12:8).

Only two old people recognized the Messiah, Simeon and Anna (Lk. 2:25-38). Truth has never been found among the majority in this world. We must not despise the day of small things, as we wait patiently for the Lord's coming and the establishment of His kingdom (Zec. 4:10).

(3) Jesus and his parents moved back to Nazareth (Lk. 2:39). At this point, Matthew takes over and relates the next events.

(4) The wise men visited Jesus when He is about two years old.

Herod had the male children from two years old and under killed, because he was told by the wise men that the star had appeared in that time frame (compare Mt. 2:7 and 2:16).

Matthew says Jesus was in "a house" (Mt. 2:11).

Matthew also says Jesus was a "young child" (Mt. 2:11) and no longer a "babe" as Luke 2:12 describes him.

(5) Joseph takes Jesus and Mary down to Egypt in obedience to the angel (Mt. 2:13-15).

(6) Joseph takes Jesus and Mary back to Nazareth after the death of Herod (Mt. 2:19-23).

Timeline Possibility #2: There is a gap of time between Luke 2:38 and 39 about which Luke is silent, and during that gap the events of Matthew 2 occur. This would mean that for some reason Joseph and Mary went back to Bethlehem and rented a house for a couple of years following Christ's birth. Assuming that this is true, the following would have been the timeline:

(1) Jesus was born in the manger in Bethlehem (Lk. 2:7).

(2) The infant Jesus was taken to the temple to be presented to the Lord (Lk. 2:22-24). This much we know for sure.

(3) Jesus and His parents moved back to Bethlehem and set up a household there for two years.

(4) The wise men visited Jesus in Bethlehem.

(5) Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt (Mt. 2:13-15).

(6) When Joseph and Mary returned from Egypt, they move back to Nazareth (Mt. 2:19-23; Lk. 2:39).

3. Which prophets said that Jesus would be a Nazarene (Mt. 2:23)?

Answer

a. Matthew does not say that it was "written" in the prophets but that it was "spoken" by the prophets. Thus it is possible that he is referring to one of the many prophecies that were spoken but not preserved in Scripture. In this case, we would not know about those prophecies except that Matthew told us about them here. This is similar to the prophecy given by Enoch and first recorded in Scripture in Jude 14-15.

b. It is also possible that this refers to the prophecies in general that described Christ as lowly and despised (Isa. 53:2, 3, 7, 9, 12; Psa. 22), as the term "Nazarene" was a proverb for this. Compare Joh. 1:46.

4. Note that Jesus was a *Nazarene*, meaning that He came from Nazareth, and not a *Nazarite*. It was the Nazarite who made a special vow to God and was not allowed to cut his hair (Num. 6:1-5). Long-haired Samson was a Nazarite from birth (Jud. 13:5). But Jesus was not a Nazarite, and if He had long hair, He would have lived contrary to the truth of His own Scriptures (1 Co. 11:14).

Matthew 3 John the Baptist and Christ's Baptism

The ministry of John the Baptist (Mt. 3:1-12)

1. He was in the wilderness of Judea a little north of Jerusalem. John's Gospel says he was in Bethabara, which was on the east side of the Jordan (Joh. 1:28).

See Map 06 - *Israel Time of Christ.*

2. John the Baptist's life was prophesied by two prophets: Isaiah (Isa. 40:2 cited in Mt. 3:3) and Malachi (Mal. 3:1 cited in Mt. 3:1; and Mal. 4:5-6 cited in Mt. 11:13). Matthew 11:14 says, "And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come." In what sense does this mean that John the Baptist was Elijah? John himself said that he was not Elijah (Joh. 1:21). This is explained by Christ in Lk. 1:17, in that John came in the spirit and power of Elijah. Elijah himself will yet come during the Tribulation to prepare Israel for Christ's coming, and it is possible that he is one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11.

3. He prepared the way for Christ (Mt. 3:3).

a. He prepared the way for Christ *by his strong preaching against sin* (Mt. 3:7-10; compare Joh. 1:23). No man can be saved until he first acknowledges his sinful condition and need of a Saviour. It is the work of the law to show men their sinful and lost condition (Ro. 3:19). The Spirit of God uses the law to bring the conviction that leads sinners to repentance.

b. He prepared the way *by identifying Christ* (Joh. 1:29-34). John preached the law to show men their need of the Saviour, and He preached the Saviour. John exalted Christ and humbled himself (Joh. 1:27; 3:30).

4. He preached "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2).

a. The phrase "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2) refers to the Messianic kingdom prophesied by the Old Testament prophets. Jesus was presenting Himself to Israel as the Messiah. See Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14. In these passages we see that the kingdom comes from heaven. The "kingdom of heaven" does not mean that it is located in heaven; it means that it is an earthly kingdom that comes from heaven.

b. The term "kingdom of heaven" is used 32 times in Matthew, but it is not used in any of the other Gospels. It is the same as the "kingdom of God." The kingdom of heaven emphasizes the fact that it is a heavenly kingdom that comes from heaven, and the kingdom of God emphasizes that it is God's kingdom, the kingdom where God rules.

Compare Mt. 4:17 with Mk. 1:15.
Compare Mt. 5:3 with Lk. 6:20.
Compare Mt. 8:11 with Lk. 13:29.
Compare Mt. 10:7 with Lk. 9:2.

c. This is the gospel of the kingdom (Mark 1:14-15). It is the gospel that was proclaimed to Israel at the coming of Christ to announce that the Messianic kingdom was at hand. It will again be preached by Jewish evangelists during the Tribulation (Mt. 24:14).

5. John preached repentance (Mt. 3:2).

a. John demanded evidence of repentance (Mt. 3:8). The apostle Paul also taught that repentance will show itself by a changed life (Acts 26:20). In Acts 26:20, we see the definition of repentance ("turn to God") and the evidence of repentance ("do works").

b. John warned that religion of the flesh is not enough (Mt. 3:9-10). This was also taught by Christ (Mt. 18:3; Joh. 3:1-7). And by Paul (Gal. 6:14-16).

c. John's baptism was the baptism of repentance (Mt. 3:11). It was for Israel. They were to repent of their sin and self-righteousness and receive Jesus as the Christ. Those who submitted to John's preaching and believed that the kingdom of heaven was at hand were baptized as an outward testimony. John's baptism was only for Israel, and it was not the same as Christian baptism, which is a picture of the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Ro. 6:4-5). Those who received John's gospel and baptism were saved, but it was not the same as our gospel and baptism.

6. He preached about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire (Mt. 3:11-12). Two Messianic prophecies described these things: Joel 2:28-29 and Malachi 3:2-5.

a. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled at Pentecost. Compare Acts 1:5; 2:1-4.

b. The baptism of fire refers to eternal judgment upon those who do not believe. Mt. 3:12 explains this. John was preaching eternal fiery judgment. We, too, need to warn people of the coming judgment. Since its inception, the Pentecostal movement has held that the baptism of fire is a baptism of power for Christians. Some Pentecostal groups even named themselves such things as "Fire Baptized Holy Ghost" people.

7. John was a transitional figure, transitioning between the Old Testament dispensation and the New, between Israel and the Church (Mt. 11:13). He was the last prophet of Israel. He is not a part of the Church, and he is not the founder of the Church. Christ is the founder of the Church (Mt. 16:18).

The Baptism of Christ (Mt. 3:12-17)

This occurred in Bethabara, which was on the east side of the Jordan (Joh. 1:28). Christ came from Galilee (Mt. 3:13).

See Map 06 - *Israel Time of Christ.*

Jesus was 30 years old when He was baptized and began His public ministry (Luke 3:21-23).

1. The purpose of Christ's baptism was to fulfill all righteousness (Mt. 3:13-15). In every point, Christ fulfilled the righteousness of God's law in the place of sinners.

2. The mode was by immersion. Jesus "went up out of the water" (Mt. 3:16). John baptized at this particular place because there was "much water" (Joh. 3:23). In contrast, the heretical modes of pouring or sprinkling do not require much water.

3. We see the Trinity at Christ's baptism (Mt. 3:16-17). The Son was baptized; the Holy Spirit descended like a dove; the Father spoke from heaven. The plan of salvation is the eternal plan and work of the Trinitarian God.

Matthew 4 Temptation of Christ

The Temptation of Christ (Mt. 4:1-11)

The temptation occurred in the wilderness of Judea, which is the dry, mountainous terrain between Jerusalem and Jericho.

See Map 06 - *Israel Time of Christ.*

See the Powerpoint *"From Jerusalem to Jericho."*

1. Christ was not tempted in order to ascertain if He *could* sin but to demonstrate that He *could not*. There was no sin in Him (1 Joh. 3:5). God cannot be tempted with sin (Jam. 1:13).

2. Christ's temptations were similar to Eve's.

In His temptation, Jesus faced the same devilish wiles as Eve faced, but Jesus was victorious in the place of fallen man.

a. The temptations pertained to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, which are the three great areas of worldly temptation (1 Joh. 2:16).

Luke gives the temptations in the same order as 1 John (Lk. 4:1-12).

(1) The first temptation pertained to the lust of the flesh (Lk. 4:3-4; Mt. 4:3-4)

(2) The second temptation pertained to the lust of the eyes (Lk. 4:5-8; Mt. 4:8-10)

(3) The third temptation pertained to the pride of life (Lk. 4:9-12; Mt. 4:5-7)

b. Three other similarities between Christ's temptation and Eve's:

(1) The devil told Eve she would be as god (Gen. 3:5); he told Christ He would be the ruler of the world.

(2) The devil told Eve to eat fruit; he told Christ to eat bread.

(3) The devil told Eve she would not die if she ate the fruit (Gen. 3:4); he told Christ He would not die if He jumped off the building.

3. There are also many contrasts between Christ's temptation and that of Eve.

a. Eve was tempted in a lovely garden; Christ was tempted in the desert.

b. Eve was tempted when she had everything her heart desired; Christ was tempted when He had fasted 40 days.

c. Eve was tempted once; Christ was tempted three times.

d. Eve failed and drew the human race into condemnation; Christ was victorious and provided the human race with salvation.

4. Christ defeated the devil by quoting Scripture (Mt. 4:4, 7, 10). The "Sword of the Spirit" is an essential part of the believer's weaponry against Satan (Eph. 6:17). It is living, powerful, and sharp (Heb. 4:12).

5. The devil also quoted Scripture (Mt. 4:6) but he misused it. He changed it, took it out of context, and misapplied it. He quoted Psalm 91:11-12, but he added the words "at any time." Compare Matthew 4:6 and Psalm 91:12. This Psalm promises protection to God's saints who walk in fellowship with Him and do His will (Psa. 91:1), but the devil twisted it to say that God will protect an individual no matter what he does.

6. Miscellaneous lessons about temptation

a. The devil's temptations are always for the purpose of causing us to stumble and sin against God.

b. Temptation itself is not sin, but yielding to it is. See James 1:14-15. We cannot avoid temptations, but by God's grace we can avoid yielding to them (1 Co. 10:13). One man said, "I cannot stop a bird from landing on my head, but I can keep it from building a nest there."

c. The devil tempts us to satisfy lawful desires in unlawful ways. Hunger is a lawful desire, but it can be satisfied either by buying bread or by stealing bread. Sexual desire was created by God, but it can be satisfied lawfully or unlawfully.

d. The temptation to sin does not come from God; it comes from the devil and from the indwelling sin nature (James 1:13-15). God, on the other hand, tests our faith through trials in order to purify, purge, strengthen, and reward us, not to hurt or destroy us (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

The beginning of Jesus' preaching and healing ministry (Mt. 4:12-25)

After John's arrest, Jesus traveled from Judea to Galilee, then relocated to Capernaum on the north coast of the Sea of Galilee.

See the Powerpoint *"Christ's Ministry on the Sea of Galilee."*

See Map 07 - *Christ's Early Travels 1.*

1. Jesus began his ministry in Galilee where he grew up (Mt. 4:12-13, 18).

This was a fulfillment of prophecy (Isaiah 9:1-2).

a. Zebulun and Naphtali were two tribes of Israel near the Sea of Galilee.

b. "by the way of the sea" refers to the Sea of Galilee.

c. "beyond Jordan" can refer either to the east or to the west of Jordan, depending on the context. Here it refers to the west side of Jordan.

d. "Galilee of the Gentiles" refers to two things:

(1) Galilee was the boundary between Israel and the Gentile lands.

(2) A large percentage of Galilee's population was Gentile, and it was therefore looked down on by the proud, self-righteous Jewish leaders in Judea. They ignorantly said that no prophet comes out of Galilee (Joh. 7:50-52). This part of Israel had been carried away captive first by the Assyrians (2 Ki. 15:29), and it was only partly repopulated with Jews. "Galilee was cut off from the theological bastion of Jerusalem. The district had never been wholly Jewish, for Solomon had given twenty Galilean cities to Hiram, king of Tyre. Constant invasions and settlement by Gentiles gave the area a mixed population; the western shore of the Sea of Galilee was dotted with numerous towns and fishing villages occupied by large numbers of Gentile people. The more racially pure cities of Judea looked with scorn on Galilee and ridiculed the Galilean accent. ... Galilee was crossed by military highways north to south and by ancient caravan routes east to west. In this busy international corridor one could as easily meet a Roman courier or a Greek architect as a quisling Jewish tax collector or a Hebrew peasant. ... In Jesus' day nine cities bordered the lake and a busy life went on all around it. Township ran into township about the feet of the green western hills, and along the shore there were docks and harbors. Farmers elbowed fishermen; dockworkers jostled coopers and shipwrights. Fishing and fish curing were

big business, employing thousands of families and making Galilee famous in the Roman world long before the Gospels were written. An intricate system of aqueducts carried water to the farms and orchards. There were dyeworks at Magdala and pottery kilns and shipyards at Capernaum. Presiding over the whole scene was the regal city of Tiberias with its magnificent Herodian palace, where Greek sculptures shone in the sun and reminded the Jews that their land was in the hands of the Gentiles. Walking the roads of Galilee, a Jew would meet long caravans heading south to the fords of Jordan. He would meet Rome's marching cohorts encased in iron, and their officers richly arrayed in armor adorned with purple and gold. He would meet Phoenician merchants bringing the treasures of lands across the sea to the bazaars and markets of a hundred towns. He would see chariots of the wealthy, troops of gladiators, and bands of roving entertainers coming to play before the cosmopolitans of Caesarea, Tiberias, and Decapolis. This was 'Galilee of the Gentiles' (Matthew 4:15), as the proud Judeans contemptuously termed it" (John Phillips, "Matthew 4).

e. This is where Jesus chose to spend most of His earthly life.

"By leaving Judea and settling in Galilee, Jesus made a significant gesture. It was an indication of His worldwide purpose, always present in His thinking even when He was ministering to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel'" (John Phillips).

f. Christ's ministry in Galilee was a great light in a dark world. Every time the gospel of Christ is preached, the light shines in the darkness and people have an opportunity to turn to the light. Unsaved men dwell in "the shadow of death" (Mt. 4:16; Isa. 9:2). In this world, we are only one breath away from death, and for the unbeliever that is one breath away from eternal death. Salvation brings life to the dead (Eph. 2:1).

2. Christ's preaching and miracles were the fulfillment of prophecy

a. His preaching was prophesied (Isaiah 50:4). Compare John 7:46; Mt. 7:29; Lk. 4:22.

b. His miracles were prophesied (Isa. 29:18; 42:6-7; 35:4-6). The miracles of Christ foreshadowed the coming kingdom.

(1) Pentecostals and Charismatics say that Christians can do Christ's miracles today, but Christ's miracle-working ministry was special and

temporary. The purpose was to demonstrate that He was the Messiah. He said repeatedly that the people should believe on Him because of His miracles (John 5:36; 10:25, 37-38; 14:11; 15:24).

(2) Today our faith is in God's Word and comes by God's Word, not by miracles (Lk. 16:27-31; Joh. 20:29-31; Ro. 10:17).

(3) Jesus rebuked those who seek miracles (Mt. 12:39).

3. What did Christ preach (Mt. 4:17)?

a. Repentance. This is what John the Baptist (Mt. 3:1-2) and the apostles preached (Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9). Paul preached both repentance and faith (Acts 20:31). Many people hear about Jesus and "believe," but they do not repent and they are not saved. Repentance is a change of mind that *results in* a change of life. It is to repent of not putting God first in my life and of breaking His holy laws. It is a surrender to God's authority.

b. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. This was the announcement of the King's arrival, in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

4. He called the first apostles (Mt. 4:18-22).

a. Peter and Andrew (Mt. 4:18-20)

(1) It appears that they were fishing partners with James and John.

(2) Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist before he followed Jesus, and Andrew led Peter to Jesus (Joh. 1:35-41).

(3) Peter's original name was Simon, meaning "a hearer" (Mt. 4:18).

- His father's name was Jona, thus Jesus called Peter "Simon Barjona" ("Simon son of Jona") (Mt. 16:17).

- Jesus changed Simon's name to "Cephas" or "Petros," meaning "a piece of a rock" or "a small rock" (Joh. 1:42). (Cephas is of *Chaldee* origin, and *Petros* is Greek.)

- Peter wrote two books of the New Testament (1 and 2 Peter).

b. James and John (Mt. 4:21-22)

(1) Jesus named them "Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17). This was their natural character, but Christ changed them to such an extent that John became known as "the apostle of love."

(2) James was the first apostle martyred for the faith (Acts 12:1-2).

(3) John became a favorite disciple of Jesus; he called himself the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (Joh. 21:20).

(4) John wrote five books of the New Testament (the Gospel of John, the three Epistles of John, and Revelation).

5. Christ's healing ministry (Mt. 4:23-25)

a. The people came from far and wide to hear Jesus and to see His miracles (Mt. 4:25). This public ministry continued for three years. Israel had no excuse for her rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

See Map 06 - *Israel in the Time of Christ*.

b. Jesus healed all manner of sickness and disease (Mt. 4:23). In the book *The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements* we give extensive documentation of the ineffectiveness of Pentecostal healing ministries.

c. Jesus healed every person who was brought to Him (Mt. 4:23-24). He never failed.

d. Christ was not limited to healing in one certain forum (such as a healing crusade).

e. As we have seen, Jesus' miracles were for the purpose of proving that He was the promised Messiah. See Isaiah 35:5-6; 42:7; John 5:36; 10:25, 37-38; 14:11; 15:24. The miracles are indisputable evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. In all of human history, no other man has done such things. And the miracles were recorded by reputable eyewitnesses. He did the miracles in the presence of His disciples, and they are recorded that all men might believe that Jesus is the Christ and receive Him as Lord and Saviour and thus have eternal life (John 20:30-31).

We will look more closely at Christ's healing ministry in the study on Matthew 8.

Matthew 5-7 Sermon on the Mount

1. The place where the Sermon on the Mount was preached

a. The sermon was probably delivered near Tabgha north of Tiberias and west of Capernaum. Jesus had moved to Capernaum when He left Nazareth at the beginning of His public ministry (Mt. 4:13), and at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, He returned to Capernaum (Mt. 8:5).

b. There is a large natural amphitheater here on a hill known as Mt. Eremos that could easily fit a multitude of people, and its acoustics are such that a loud voice could carry for a long distance. The Byzantines built a church here in the fourth century, so tradition has connected this site with the Sermon on the Mount for 1,700 years. The Catholic church that exists there today was built in 1938 by Italy. When Pope John Paul II visited here in 2000, Catholic officials prepared for 100,000 people. Though fewer came due to rain, the place was sufficient to accommodate such a great crowd.

See Map 08 - *Christ's Early Travels 2*.

For photos of this place see the PowerPoint *"Christ's Ministry on the Sea of Galilee."*

2. The Sermon on the Mount compared to other sermons in the Gospels

Parts of this sermon were preached at other places and times. "In my opinion, the Sermon on the Mount was Jesus' 'standard' sermon. It was the core of His itinerant message: a simple proclamation of how God expects us to live, contrasting with common Jewish misunderstandings of that life. It may be that when Jesus preached to a new audience, He often preached this sermon or used the themes from it" (Matthew 5, Biblehub.com).

(1) Compare Matthew 5:29-30 with Mark 9:43-47. This was a different situation. In Mark 9:43-47, Jesus was teaching His disciples privately. See Mark 9:31. Also immediately after the teaching in Mark 9, Christ went into "the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan" (Mk. 10:1). In contrast, after the sermon in Matthew 5-7, Christ went to Capernaum (Mt. 8:5).

(2) Compare Matthew 5-7 with Luke 6:17-49. This, too, was a different situation. The sermon in Matthew was preached on a mountain (Mt. 5:1), whereas the

sermon in Luke was preached on a plain (Lk. 6:17). The sermon in Luke 6:17-49 is not merely a shortened edition of the Sermon on the Mount. It is a different sermon but with many similarities. Major differences include Luke 6:38, 39, 40, which are unique to Luke.

3. The addressees of the Sermon on the Mount

The sermon was largely addressed to Christ's disciples, though many others were present (Mt. 5:1).

a. This is how we understand the frequent references to "your Father" (Mt. 5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15, 18, 26, 32; 7:11).

(1) Christ would not tell a mixed multitude to pray to "our Father which art in heaven," since He told the Pharisees that they were the children of the devil (Joh. 8:44), and He told Nicodemus that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Joh. 3:3).

(2) This is the first reference to God as Father in Christ's ministry. It is not a teaching that was prominent in the Old Testament, but it was revealed by the incarnation of the Son. In the Gospels, suddenly Jehovah God of the Old Testament is the Father, Son, and Spirit of the New. This is not explained or proven; it is simply declared; and there is no indication that the Lord's disciples had a problem accepting Trinitarian doctrine.

b. Some parts of the sermon, particularly Matthew 7:13-14, 21-27, are addressed to the wider audience. These warnings about false professions of salvation are addressed to all. Compare 2 Corinthians 13:5 and Hebrews 3:12.

4. What the Sermon on the Mount teaches us about Jesus

a. He is a preacher and teacher. He loves to teach God's Word to men. This is His mercy and kindness. He will continue this ministry forever. Imagine sitting under Christ's teaching in His kingdom! See Isaiah 2:3.

b. He is all-wise. Many learned men have observed that the Sermon on the Mount excels all other teaching that the world has ever seen. We can study this one sermon forever and never come to the end of its teaching.

c. He is the Son of God. Only God could make the statements that He made in this sermon. He taught from His own authority. He did not say, "Thus saith the Lord" as a prophet. He said, "For verily I say unto you" (Mt. 5:18). And He

exalted Himself above the law of Moses, claiming to have the authority to interpret the law of God infallibly. Six times He quotes the law and then says, "But I say unto you" (Mt. 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). He thus demonstrated that He is "greater than Moses."

5. The five-fold purpose of the Sermon on the Mount

a. *In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus preached the principles of the coming kingdom of God.*

These are truths by which men will live in the kingdom that Christ will establish upon His return. Jesus makes this clear by mentioning the kingdom in the very first statement (Mt. 5:3) and by mentioning it eight other times. Just prior to this, Christ was preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Mt. 4:23).

Many things described therein have never been fulfilled on earth and will be fulfilled during the Millennium when Christ will rule with "a rod of iron" (Psa. 2:8-9; Re. 19:15).

(1) Consider Matthew 5:21-26. A person who is angry at someone without a just cause will be in danger of the judgment. This probably refers to punishment administered by local authorities. If a person calls another "Raca," he will be in danger of the council, which probably refers to a higher level of magistrate. "Raca" is a term that literally means "O empty or worthless one." It is a term of "utter vilification" (Strong). If, on the other hand, a person calls someone "thou fool," he will be in danger of hell fire. It is not simply the use of the word "fool" itself that encompasses this great sin, but the use of the word "fool" as an expression of selfish anger and intended hurt. It is an expression of a murderous heart. Christ Himself called men fools on occasion (Mt. 23:17, 19; Lk. 11:40; 24:50), and the apostle Paul called certain men fools for questioning the bodily resurrection (1 Co. 15:36). The point is that during Christ's earthly millennial reign even sinful actions that are deemed relatively harmless in this present time will be dealt with firmly, even severely. It appears that there will be the potential, even, for rebels to be cast into hell fire during the Millennium because of their unrepentant sinful actions. Note that Jesus does not say that a person who does these things "shall be" judged but that he is "*in danger of*" being judged. There will be a place in God's righteous kingdom for genuine repentance and mercy.

(2) Consider Matthew 5:25-26. Again, this has never been fulfilled in any context on earth. It was not fulfilled in Israel during Christ's day and it is not fulfilled in the church age. New Testament churches have no authority to imprison anyone. These verses look ahead to conditions that will exist during Christ's kingdom. If an individual does not quickly reconcile with an adversary over an unpaid debt or other obligation he will be put into prison until the obligation is entirely satisfied. This is rule with a "rod of iron." To fail to pay one's debt is the sin of lying and stealing.

b. *In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus established the law of Moses for its intended purpose, which is to reveal sin and man's lost condition and to lead sinners to Christ* (Mt. 5:17-19).

The law is not the gospel and the Sermon on the Mount is not the gospel. The law prepares the way for the gospel by revealing God's absolute holiness and exposing man's sin and need of a Saviour (Ro. 3:19-22; Gal. 3:10-13, 24-25).

(1) The words "faith" or "believe" nowhere appear in this Sermon.

(2) The Sermon on the Mount shows the requirement of the law

- Consider Mt. 5:48. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." *This is not the gospel*; it is not the way of salvation. Compare Deu. 10:12-13.

- Consider Mt. 7:12, which also gives a summary of the requirement of the law.

(3) Jesus showed that keeping the law is not merely a matter of outward obedience but that it requires inward obedience and purity of heart, which further shows the impossibility of a sinner being saved through the law.

Murder is a heart matter (Mt. 5:21-22). Murder is not merely killing someone but also involves the inner hatred that motivates people to kill. The warning is not against the use of the word "fool" itself but the use of such language with the purpose of hurting someone "without a cause." Jesus called people fools (Mt. 23:17, 19; Lk. 24:25), but in so doing He was speaking the truth in love.

Adultery is a heart matter (Mt. 5:27-28). This shows how deep the law of God is and how impossible it is to be saved by keeping it, because our hearts are so sinful and corrupt (Jer. 17:9). When Jesus said that a man can commit

adultery with a woman by looking, He was not referring to appreciating a woman's beauty. A man could never find a mate and get married if he were not allowed to look in that way. Jesus was referring to *the purpose of the look (*looking specifically to satisfy sexual lust), and He was referring to *the direction of the look* (looking at those aspects of the woman that are particularly related to sexual lust).

Loving others means not merely loving my own but loving even my enemies (Mt. 5:43-47). Here Jesus was also correcting the false additions to the law that had been added by the rabbis. Mt. 5:43 is a reference to Lev. 19:18, but the rabbis had added "hate your enemies." The Old Testament law itself did not teach that. The rabbis had taught that you should love *only* your neighbor and that you have no obligation beyond that, but in reality God's law says we are to love all men. This exposes the sinfulness of our nature, because we do not do that.

(4) Matthew 5:20 says the righteousness required for salvation is beyond that of the most religious man. This is because every man is a sinner and cannot perform the perfection required by the law. We must be forgiven of our sins and have the very righteousness of Christ put to our account (Ro. 3:21-22).

(5) Jesus fulfilled the law for us (Mt. 5:17). He lived the righteousness that the law demands, and He made the atonement for sinners that the law requires. Salvation is an exchange. It is a matter of substitution. Christ was made sin for us, and the believer is made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

c. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ refuted the Jewish traditions that had weakened the law.

The rabbis had made the law of God of none effect by their traditions and false interpretations (Mt. 15:6). In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ destroys these traditions and reveals the law of God in its true righteous character. This was for the purpose of establishing the law for its divinely intended purpose to show man his unrighteous condition before God and to cause him to flee to Christ for salvation.

For example, Jewish tradition had weakened the law of divorce by teaching that divorce could be obtained for almost any reason, whereas the law actually

allowed only one reason, which was uncleanness (Deu. 24:1). Christ refuted that vain tradition and re-established the law by teaching that the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24:1 means fornication (Mt. 5:21-22).

d. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ exposes the error of Phariseeism and religious self-righteousness, which makes the law of Moses into a means of salvation. See Romans 9:30-33.

e. *In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus delivered principles by which we are to live in the church age.*

Though the Sermon on the Mount looks beyond the church age to the establishment of the kingdom, it contains principles that are applicable for believers today. This is like how believers in the church age use the Old Testament (Ro. 15:4; 1 Co. 10:1-11).

Consider five examples of lessons from the Sermon on the Mount for the Christian life. Actually, every verse has lessons.

(1) Encouragement in persecution (Mt. 5:10-12)
(2) Prayer (Mt. 6:5-15)
(3) Fasting (Mt. 6:17-18)
(4) Laying up treasures for heaven (Mt. 6:19-21)
(5) Putting God first and trusting Him for one's needs (Mt. 6:33)

f. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shows the evidence of repentance and true salvation.

Compare Matthew 3:2, 8; 4:17. Matthew 5-7 does not show the *way* of salvation; it shows the *fruit* of salvation.

(1) The "poor in spirit" and "those who mourn" and the "meek" (Mt. 5:3-5) are those who have humbled themselves before God and who do not boast of themselves and their accomplishments. Compare Psa. 138:6.

"Poor in spirit" is the opposite of self-righteousness and self-dependency. The poor in spirit know that they are spiritually bankrupt before God. They know that they are sinners before God and that they have no righteousness that is acceptable to God except in Jesus Christ (Isa. 64:6). They are like the publican of Luke 18:13. They are utterly dependent on God. They are like Agur who knew that apart from the wisdom of God's Spirit he is "brutish" (Prov. 30:1-4).

Note that "poor in spirit" stands at the beginning of the Beatitudes. A poor spirit, a humbled spirit, a repentant spirit, is the door into salvation and into all of God's blessings. It is the secret to spiritual sanctification. Repentance changes the individual from inside out. It begins in the spirit and is then seen in the life.

The mourning of Matthew 5:4 does not refer to mourning in general, but to mourning about sin and its effects. The context is talking about spiritual characteristics. Christ is talking about God-centered mourning rather than selfish, worldly mourning. It is the mourning of Psalm 88:9; 119:136.

(2) To "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Mt. 5:6) is the change of life that follows salvation. Ephesians 2:8-10 says we are saved by grace without works, but we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. No sinner hungers after righteousness unless he has been regenerated (Titus 3:5).

(3) To be "pure in heart" (Mt. 5:8) requires the change that follows salvation (Acts 15:9). It is impossible for the sinner to be pure in heart until he is born again, because the heart is naturally deceitful and wicked (Jer. 17:9). The heart of the saved still contains corruption, because the "old man" is still present, but can be pure before God in that it is converted to God and has complete trust in Christ (Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 1:22).

(4) The "peacemakers" (Mt. 5:9) are those that have first found peace with God (Ro. 5:1) and who seek to bring others to peace with God (2 Co. 5:18-20). Theological liberals and ecumenists and globalists teach that peacemakers in general are the children of God, but this is to take the passage out of context and to ignore the rest of the Bible. Apart from salvation in Jesus Christ, sinners are children of the devil (Joh. 8:44). The sinner is adopted into God's family only through faith in Jesus Christ (Joh. 1:12; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 1:5). There is no true peace to the wicked (Isaiah 48:22; 57:21). The peacemakers of this world who are not committed to Jesus Christ and His Word are false prophets (1 Th. 5:3).

6. Other lessons from the Sermon on the Mount

a. Christ promised great reward for those who are persecuted (Mt. 5:10-12). God sees everything and has great rewards for those who serve Him and bear the reproach of Christ in this world.

(1) The cause of this persecution is righteousness and Jesus Christ (Mt. 5:10, 11). The world loves sin and is therefore convicted by righteousness (Eph. 5:8-13). The world loves false christs, but it hates the true Christ of the Bible who emphatically and dogmatically said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Joh. 14:6).

(2) The most persistent form of persecution is reviling (Mt. 5:11). It takes the form of slanders and false accusations, hateful name-calling, mocking and ridicule, and such. *Revile* means to defame, rail at, chide, taunt (Strong). Compare Lk. 6:22; Heb. 11:36; 1 Pet. 4:14; Jude 15.

(3) Victory over persecution is to look beyond this present life to Christ's rule and the believer's rule with Him. The believer is twice told to look to "heaven" to endure persecution (Mt. 5:10-12). "The Lord will one day triumph in the arena of His rejection. All appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, His persecuted people will come into their own, 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' (Mt. 5:10). ... Then those who have suffered with Him will reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12)" (John Phillips).

b. Christ taught about the seriousness of maintaining a good testimony (Mt. 5:13-16)

Christ uses two metaphors to describe the importance of the believer's testimony in this world. He warns about ***salt*** becoming good for nothing and ***light*** being hidden. This is what happened to Israel, which was supposed to be God's salt and light in a fallen world. It has often happened to professing Christians and churches. It was already happening to some of the churches in the first century AD (Re. 2:14-16, 20-23; 3:2-3, 15-18).

(1) Salt preserves goodness and holds back corruption. Salt was the most commonly used preservative before refrigeration. Likewise, believers can restrain the spread of sin by their good examples (1 Pet. 2:11-12). Salt has to do with the believer's testimony and character. Salt is powerful, and the salt of Bible-believing Christians can spread widely in society and affect an entire nation, such as in the first 200 years of American history.

(2) Light dispels darkness. The most powerful spiritual light is God's Word (2 Pet. 1:19), but it must be backed up by a sound Christian testimony ("see your works" Mt. 5:16; Phil. 2:14-16). The church is the pillar of the truth, which means it is to uphold the truth in the midst of darkness (1 Tim. 3:15).

The church's job is to proclaim the gospel (Mk. 16:15) and to use the law of God to expose sin as a schoolmaster to lead sinners to Christ (Gal. 3:24). The reproof of sin is spiritual light (Eph. 5:11-13). Reproving sin is a difficult, even a dangerous job, but it has great potential to bring blessing through repentance and faith.

(3) Light is described both as a city and a candle (Mt. 5:14-15). A lone candle signifies the individual believer, while a city signifies the assembly with its multiple candles combining into one. It is God's will that believers join together in the churches to multiply and magnify the spiritual light.

(4) By comparing Matthew 5 with Luke 8, we see two major ways that the believer's light is hidden: under a bushel (Mt. 5:15) and under a bed (Lk. 8:16). A bushel was a basket containing a measure of grain and signifies commerce and labor, while a bed signifies leisure and pleasure. Many believers have hidden their light by pursuing business, hobbies, and various forms of pleasure rather than putting God first and pursuing His perfect will.

c. Christ promised the fulfillment of the law and the prophets (Mt. 5:17-18).

(1) He fulfilled the moral law by His righteous and sinless life. He thus became the believer's righteousness (1 Co. 1:30; 2 Co. 5:21).

(2) He fulfilled the ritual law by His atoning sacrifice. This was the fulfillment of the entire Levitical sacrificial system. John stated this in a nutshell when He proclaimed Jesus as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Joh. 1:29).

(3) He fulfilled all of the prophecies about His first coming (Lk. 24:27).

"God's law had two parts: the moral law and the ceremonial law. In His amazing life the Lord Jesus fulfilled the demands of the moral law. In His death He fulfilled the details of the ceremonial law, which was chiefly concerned with sacrifices and offerings. He fulfilled the rich symbolism of the sin offering, the trespass offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, and the burnt offering. Jesus was the goat that was slain on the day of atonement, whose blood was taken into the holy of holies; and He was the scapegoat upon which were laid the sins of the people before it was led away into 'a land not inhabited' (Leviticus 16:22). He was the bird that the

cleansed leper brought to be slain in his stead; and He was the other bird that the cleansed leper brought to be dipped in the blood of the first bird before being set free to fly heavenward for home. Jesus was the unleavened bread of the passover, and He was the paschal lamb. His were the ashes of the red heifer, and His was the blood that was shed for sin. The red rivers that poured from ten thousand times ten thousand sacrifices were but a feeble type of His precious blood. ... Jesus fulfilled the prophets as well as the law. The prophets in glory must have been overjoyed at the life Jesus lived on earth. 'I wrote about His suffering,' Isaiah might have cried, reciting Isaiah 53, 'and look how He has fulfilled my words to the letter!' David might have added, 'Yes, and Psalm 22 as well, and Psalm 69.' God would have commented, 'This is my beloved Son,' and the angels would have gazed down in wonder, for these are 'things the angels desire to look into' (1 Peter 1:12)" (John Phillips' commentary on Matthew).

d. Christ promised the preservation of Scripture (Mt. 5:18). A *jot* is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and a *tittle* is a tiny stroke that distinguishes one Hebrew letter from another.

(1) Not only has God inspired the Scriptures verbally, He has promised to keep the Scriptures pure. Compare Psalm 12:6-7. Some have argued that the promise of preservation in verse 7 cannot point to the words of verse 6, because "the gender differences between the masculine plural pronominal suffix 'them' and its antecedent feminine plural 'words' forces one to look for another antecedent which is masculine plural (i.e., 'poor' and 'needy' in v. 5)" (William Combs, "The Preservation of Scripture," *Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary Journal, 2001*). Dr. Thomas Strouse of Emmanuel Baptist Seminary, Newington, Connecticut, answers this argument: "However two important grammatical points overturn his [Combs'] argument. First, the rule of proximity requires 'words' to be the natural, contextual antecedent for 'them.' Second, it is not uncommon, especially in the Psalter, for feminine plural noun synonyms for the 'words' of the Lord to be the antecedent for masculine plural pronouns/pronominal suffixes, which seem to 'masculinize' the verbal extension of the patriarchal God of the Old Testament. Several examples of this supposed gender difficulty occur in Psa. 119. In verse 111, the feminine plural 'testimonies' is the antecedent for the masculine plural pronoun 'they.' Again, in three passages

the feminine plural synonyms for 'words' have masculine plural pronominal suffixes (vv. 129, 152, 167). These examples include Psa. 119:152 (*'Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou has founded them for ever'*), which Combs affirms to be 'a fairly direct promise of preservation' of the written form of the Torah (p. 18). As the KJV/TR bibliologists have argued all along, both the context and the grammar (proximity rule and accepted gender discordance) of Psa. 12:6-7 demand the teaching of the preservation of the Lord's pure words for every generation."

(2) This passage is one of three that proves that Jesus used the Hebrew Old Testament and not a Greek translation called the Septuagint.

- The fact that Jesus spoke of the jots and tittles proves that He used the Hebrew Old Testament, not a Greek translation. Greek does not have jots and tittles.

- Another proof is found in Lk. 24:44, where Jesus referred to the division of the Hebrew Old Testament: the law, the prophets, and the psalms. The Greek Septuagint did not use this division.

- Another proof is in Lk. 11:51, where Jesus alluded to the first and last books of the Hebrew Old Testament: Abel in Genesis and Zacharias in 2 Chronicles 24, which is the last book of the Hebrew Old Testament canon. The Greek Old Testament ends, instead, with the prophet Daniel.

- Further, the evidence for the existence of the Greek Septuagint prior to the first century is suspect.

e. Jesus emphasized the need for reconciliation (Mt. 5:21-24). The first interpretation of this is for the millennial kingdom when the sacrificial altar will again be established in Israel (Mt. 5:23). See Ezekiel 43:13-27. But there is an application of this principle to the church age.

(1) Jesus shows that hatred in the heart is the root of the sin of murder, and God is concerned as much with the heart as the actions.

(2) God is as concerned about good relations between brethren as He is about offerings, and He wants us to check up on our relationships before we make an offering (Mt. 5:24). Note that Jesus did not say that offerings are not important; He assumes that His people will make offerings.

(3) The believer is to take the initiative in reconciliation (Mt. 5:23). I am not supposed to wait until the offended party comes to me, but I am to go to the offended party and seek reconciliation. It might be the case that the offense is only perceived, but still I am to go to the one who is holding an offense and work the matter out in a godly manner.

f. Christ warned of the sin of sexual lust (Mt. 5:17-30).

(1) Christ is making the law strong so it will do its intended work, which is to show men their fallen condition and lead them to salvation. Christ was showing that the law of God requires that men be pure in heart and in action. Adultery comes from man's fallen heart (Mt. 15:19). It began when Adam and Eve broke God's commandment and ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:6-7). The human heart became darkened and the thoughts of the heart became oriented toward sin and illicit lust.

(2) This reminds us of the importance of modest dress. Prior to the fall, nakedness was not a problem because the thoughts of the human heart were not sinful. After the fall, God clothed Adam and Eve properly and modestly in coats of skins (Gen. 3:21). The Bible describes two kinds of female dress that are the product of two kinds of female hearts. The "attire of an harlot" is the attire of a woman who is "subtil of heart" (Prov. 7:10). The "modest apparel" is the attire of a woman who is "shamefaced and sober" (1 Tim. 2:9). The godly woman fears God and does not want to cause offense and she therefore dresses in such a manner that she does not draw the attention of men's lust. She dresses modestly because she has a modest heart.

(3) This reminds us of the importance of a man guarding his eyes (Job 31:1; Psalm 101:3). It is the man's responsibility to guard his eyes. A man cannot help noticing women, but he can control *how* he looks at them and what he ponders on in his heart. Proverbs 4:23-25 says that we keep the heart by guarding the eyes.

(4) *Question*: What did Jesus mean when he talked about plucking out the offending eye or cutting off the offending hand (Mt. 5:29-30)? *Answer*: He was showing that salvation comes only by the new birth. The eye and hand are not the source of lust. Even if one were to cut off his right hand, the lust in the heart would not be quenched. Jesus was forcing sinners to look at the

source of sin, which is the heart, and to understand that religion and good works cannot change one's nature or bring forgiveness for even one sin. **Jesus used shocking language and imagery to force men to face their desperate sinful condition and need of salvation.** Jesus was speaking to religious Jews who trusted their good works to make them right with God, and He was attempting to remove their false hope based on the flesh so they would be saved. See Gal. 6:15.

g. Christ emphasized the seriousness of divorce (Mt. 5:31-32).

(1) He rejected easy divorce (Mt. 5:31). The law of Moses allowed divorce for the cause of "uncleanness" (Deu. 24:1). The rabbinical school of Hillel interpreted this to mean that a man could divorce his wife if she was displeasing to him in any way, "a view of the law too well fitted to minister to caprice and depraved inclination not to find extensive favor. And, indeed, to this day the Jews allow divorces on the most frivolous pretexts" (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown). This reminds us of the "no fault" divorce laws in most western nations.

(2) Christ gave the true interpretation of Deu. 24:1. The "uncleanness" refers to fornication. This is a broad term covering all forms of sexual sin. He gave the same "exception clause" in Matthew 19:9.

(3) The one who is divorced and remarried for a cause other than fornication is an adulterer (Mt. 5:32). Christ is showing the seriousness of the sin of adultery. He was making the law strong for its true purpose, which is to show man his sin and his need of salvation. Adultery is a grave sin with great and abiding consequences. It can be forgiven (1 Co. 6:9-11), but the consequences remain. The same is true for the sin of illegitimate divorce and remarriage. The sin can be forgiven in Jesus Christ, but the negative consequences are almost legion, as most anyone who has been divorced and remarried will testify.

(4) As for remarriage, the law of Moses allowed remarriage when the divorce was for the cause of fornication (Deu. 24:2).

h. Christ warned about swearing and oaths (Mt. 5:33-37).

(1) Again Christ is refuting Jewish tradition that had misinterpreted the law of Moses and lessened its power. The law forbade false oaths (Lev. 19:12)

and emphasized the necessity of keeping one's word (Num. 30:2; Deu. 23:31-33). The emphasis is on being perfectly honest and not lying and dissembling, which condemns the fallen man who is deceitful by nature (Jer. 17:9). Jewish tradition had invented ways to circumvent God's requirement of perfect honesty and to allow for various forms of dishonesty and cheating. For example, if someone swore by something other than God (e.g., the earth or one's own head), that oath was considered less binding and the individual could break that oath under some circumstances. And if the individual gave his word about a matter but failed to swear by God, that oath was considered less binding.

(2) Christ was refuting false teaching about oaths, not forbidding all oaths. Hebrews 6:16 says that men make oaths in the context of agreements, and it does not condemn this. Paul used an oath in Ro. 1:9; 2 Co. 1:23; Gal. 1:20, and the angel used an oath in Revelation 10:5-6. "We conclude, then, that judicial oaths, and oaths taken in the name of God on occasions of solemn religious importance, are not included in the prohibition" (*The Fourfold Gospel and Commentary on Acts*). The passage in Matthew 5:33-37 is not referring to something like giving one's oath in a court of law or a president swearing the oath of office on a Bible.

(3) Christ is condemning the following practices:

Christ is condemning the deceitful Jewish practice of requiring an oath using God's name before an oath was binding. As we have already mentioned, they would swear by heaven, by the earth, and by their own head (Mt. 5:34-36), and this was considered of lesser binding authority. "It will be seen from the quotation given by Jesus that the law permitted oaths made unto the Lord (Ex. 22:11; Nu. 5:19). It was not the intention of Jesus to repeal this law. But the Jews, looking upon this law, construed it as giving them exemption from the binding effect of all other oaths. According to their construction no oath was binding in which the sacred name of God did not directly occur. They therefore coined many other oaths to suit their purposes, which would add weight to their statements or promises, which, however, would not leave them guilty of being forsworn if they spoke untruthfully. But Jesus showed that all oaths were ultimately referable to God, and that those who made them would be forsworn if they did not keep them" (*The Fourfold Gospel and Commentary on Acts*).

Christ is condemning oaths that are frivolous and boastful (Mt. 5:36). To swear by one's head or some such thing in this world is vain because we do not have power over these things. We cannot change the color of even one hair.

Christ is condemning oaths made in ordinary conversation (Mt. 5:37). Instead of swearing or making oaths, we should merely say yes or no. The main thing that Christ is emphasizing is truthfulness and honesty in all of one ways. The believer should be a man of his word. God is the God of truth; He cannot lie; His every word is truth; and His people are to reflect this character. "All contracts and promises must be kept. Our word should be our bond. We should be marked by total integrity in commitment because our word is backed by total integrity of character. We are to do what we say we will do, whether the commitment is great or small, convenient or inconvenient (Psa. 15:4)" (John Phillips).

i. Christ warned about personal retribution (Mt. 5:38-42).

(1) The Jews had taken the statements of the Mosaic law out of context and had given themselves the right to seek personal retribution for any injury. "The Jews always thought that every outrage should be resented; and thus the spirit of hatred and strife was fostered" (Adam Clarke).

Note some lessons from the three times that the law of Moses mentions "an eye for an eye." We will examine these in context.

Exodus 21:22-25. The context deals with injury caused to a pregnant woman. Note that the punishment is to be meted out by the judges, not by the individual who is offended. If the infant is injured or killed, the one who caused the injury was to pay in like manner.

Leviticus 24:19-20. Here the context is injury caused to one's neighbor. The punishment is to be given by the entire congregation and not merely by the injured individual. See Lev. 24:13-14.

Deuteronomy 19:16-21. The context here is a man who brings false witness against another person. He is to be punished with the same punishment that he attempted to charge against the innocent person. Note again that the punishment is determined by the judges, not by the offended party (Deu. 19:17). This is the type of law that will be in effect in Christ's kingdom. Liars

and false accusers will not get away with that sin as they do in this present world.

(2) Christ taught that rather than seeking personal retribution against injury, the believer should exercise patience and forgiveness (Mt. 5:38-42).

This is often repeated in the New Testament Epistles (Ro. 12:20-21; 1 Co. 4:12; 1 Pet. 2:21-23; 3:9).

These examples are given in the context of compulsion by authorities and in the context of persecution for one's faith (Mt. 5:38-42), of being beaten for one's faith (Mt. 5:39), of being compelled to go a mile by the Roman authorities (Mt. 5:41). God's Word forbids us to defend the gospel with force. "Quite the contrary to the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of the age, which espouses marches, demonstrations, and civil disobedience; settles disputes with strikes and confrontation; and fosters disaffection for and defiance of authority" (John Phillips).

These examples are not intended to cover every situation in life. In properly interpreting the Bible, we must first examine the context, then we must compare Scripture with Scripture. For example, it is proper to defend oneself against unjust charges (i.e., Acts 16:36-39). Later Jesus instructed His disciples to purchase a sword for self-defense (Lk. 22:36). "If a believer is attacked with violence or robbery, he has the right before God to defend himself and his family and others, but if he is being persecuted for his faith, he must bear it. The idea is not that we must always passively suffer the assault of the assassin, the bully, or the thief. However, when the interests of Christ's kingdom demand that we turn the other cheek, we should" (John Phillips).

Consider Matthew 5:42:

- This commandment is spoken in the context of compulsion by authorities and the context of persecution for one's faith (Mt. 5:38-42). This is not referring to casual requests for gifts and loans by friends and neighbors. During the Catholic Inquisition, for example, the inquisitors often stole the victim's property. In such a situation, the believer must trust God and not try to take matters into his own hands and fight with a sword or gun.

- The Bible elsewhere says that the believer's possessions are his own and he should determine how they should be used; that giving should be of a free will and not forced (Acts 5:4; 2 Co. 9:7; 1 Tim. 6:17-19).

- In matters of giving to those who ask, both prudence and charity must be considered. For example, to give money to a drunkard or a drug user who will use the money to purchase alcohol or drugs is not Christian charity or wisdom and does not help that individual. Another case is a "beggar" who is pretending to be in need but is lying and doesn't want to labor. "The Bible forbids us to help those who refuse to work (2 The. 3:10).

- In matters of giving to those who ask, the believer must also consider his other obligations. For example, a man's first obligation is to his own family and if he somehow neglects that obligation he is said to be worse than an infidel (1 Tim. 5:8). I think of a Christian man who gave to others to such an extent that he neglected his own wife and children and thus caused them to resent his generosity. That is neither wise nor godly.

- The primary teaching of this verse is that the believer is to "be in the habit of giving," to have a continual open heart toward those in need; to be *ready* to distribute, *willing* to communicate (1 Tim. 6:18; 1 Joh. 3:17). Those with a true need should never be turned away if it is in our power to help.

- This teaching of God's law exposes the inherent selfishness of the natural man.

j. Christ taught the meaning of true love (Mt. 5:43-48).

(1) Again Christ corrected Jewish tradition, which taught to love one's neighbor (other Jews) and to hate one's enemy (all Gentiles). The law of Moses did not teach this. The law taught to love one's neighbor (Lev. 19:18), but it never taught to hate one's enemies. In fact, the law taught the Jews not to hate the Edomites and Egyptians (Deu. 23:6). The law of God shows that hatred is sin, but by their tradition the Jews felt that hatred was good. Jewish tradition defined "neighbour" narrowly as one's friends and relatives, so they were not convicted by God's law that required them to love all men as neighbors. Compare Luke 10:29-37. Thus the law of God was again made of none effect by their tradition.

(2) Christ showed the sin of His listeners by using the publicans as an illustration (Mt. 5:46-47). The Jews hated the publicans and considered them chiefest of sinners, but Christ taught that if they don't love all men, they are sinners like the publicans. Likewise, if a Christian loves only his family and friends and close acquaintances, he is no better than an unbeliever.

(3) We see that God loves all men (Mt. 5:45, 48). This refutes hyper-Calvinism, which teaches that God loves only the elect. Compare John 3:16.

(4) Christ, God manifest in the flesh, showed the way in this matter when He prayed for those who crucified Him (Lk. 23:34) and when He saved the thief on the cross who had previously reviled Him (Mt. 27:44; Lk. 23:39-43).

(5) Christ ended this part of the sermon with the obligation that the believer be perfect like God (Mt. 5:48). Compare Deu. 10:12-13.

- This is the demand of the law, which shows that it is impossible for any sinner to be saved by the law (Ro. 3:19-20; Gal. 3:10). In this sermon, Christ exposed the error of Phariseeism, which makes the law of Moses into a means of salvation. See Romans 9:30-33.

- This is the process of sanctification for the believer. It was repeated by Peter (1 Pet. 1:15-16). It is not possible to be perfect in this present life, but it is the believer's goal, and the indwelling Spirit impels him toward this end. We are to put on Christ (Ro. 13:14), to put off the old man and put on the new man (Eph. 4:22-24). This is the process of daily sanctification in this present world.

k. Christ taught about almsgiving (Mt. 6:1-4).

(1) He warns against hypocrisy and self-righteousness in religious deeds. God looks on the heart. He measures our motives. Those with impure motives are not rewarded. The Jews had made almsgiving into a form of religious pride and self-righteousness.

(2) Christ is showing that religion cannot save.

(3) God is a rewarder of those who serve Him with a right motive. There is a continual laying up of treasures in heaven by the individual who serves God with a right heart. Compare Mt. 10:41-42; Heb. 6:10; 11:6.

l. Christ taught about prayer (Mt. 6:5-15).

The Son of God on earth was a Man of prayer, and in this marvelous passage He teaches His people how to pray.

(1) Effectual prayer is not for show after the fashion of the Pharisees (Mt. 6:5). If prayer is for man's sake, it is hypocrisy. I think of some church members who have a very poor testimony, but when they pray in church they sound so spiritual! Only the Lord knows man's heart, but oftentimes this is probably just a show. God hates hypocrisy. What we are in church on Sunday, we must be on Monday in the home and at the job and in our private lives.

(2) Effectual prayer flows from an intimate relationship with God (Mt. 6:6).

Effectual prayer is not a religious ritual; it is communicating with God as Abba Father. It requires that the supplicant know God as Father through repentance and faith in Christ. The secret of answered prayer is the supplicant's day-by-day walk with God in the most secret and intimate part of his life.

Prayer should first be a private matter between me and God (Mt. 6:6).

- This does not mean that public prayer is not important; it means that prayer starts in my private life, and if I don't have an effective private prayer life I should not pray in public.

- There are at least four kinds of prayer: private closet prayer (Mt. 6:6; Ro. 1:9), continual prayer (1 The. 5:17), corporate prayer or praying *with* others (Mt. 18:19-20; Acts 4:24, 31; 12:5, 12; 2 Co. 1:11), desperate prayer (Mt. 14:30).

(3) Effectual prayer is not vain repetition (Mt. 6:7-8).

This is not a warning against repetition in the sense of praying for the same things persistently. The Bible encourages that (e.g., Lk. 18:1).

It is a warning against *VAIN* repetition, such as the following examples:

- Hindu mantras and Buddhist prayer wheels are vain repetitions. At the Boudha stupa in Kathmandu, Nepal, Buddhists circumnavigate the stupa clockwise a prescribed number of times while whirling their prayer wheels. The prayers which are written on the wheel and on paper inside the wheel are supposed to be activated by the repetitious rituals.

- Nominal Christians engage in vain repetition when they use rote prayers and ritualistic liturgy. For example, the Lord's Prayer itself has been turned into a rote ritual. Catholic prayer beads are an example of ritualistic, repetitious prayers. The practitioner prays the Lord's Prayer six times and the Hail Mary 50 times! The Scala Sancta in Rome is another illustration of vain repetitious prayers. These are supposed to be the 28 steps that Christ ascended to appear before Pilate. Supplicants climb the stairs on their knees while repeating at each step, "My Jesus, through the sorrow you suffered in being separated from your dear Mother and your beloved disciples, have mercy on me. Holy Mother, pierce me through in my heart each wound renew of my Saviour crucified."

- Contemplative prayer, which comes from the Catholic monastic movement and has swept through evangelicalism in the last couple of decades, also uses vain repetition. For example, the Jesus prayer consists of repeating the name "Jesus" with every breath. In another form the Jesus Prayer consists of repeating, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me," or, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." This is to be repeated throughout the day. J.P. Moreland and Klaus Issler of Biola University recommend saying the Jesus Prayer 300 times a day (*The Lost Virtue of Happiness*, p. 90). Some ancient monastic contemplative manuals suggest that it be said from 3,000 to 12,000 times a day (Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way*, p. 60). Centering prayer is another example of vain repetition in the contemplative prayer movement. It uses the repetition of a "sacred word" such as "God" or "love" as a mantra to enter into a contemplative mindset.

- Many Pentecostals and Charismatics use vain repetition, such as, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus," or, "Come, Holy Spirit; come, Holy Spirit." Charismatic praise music often incorporates large amounts of repetition, so that it has been called "7/11 music," referring to seven words sung 11 times.

The warning against vain repetition might teach us that when praying in groups it is better to divide up the prayer requests among the individuals, and as the individual men or women pray for that thing the others agree fervently in their hearts and with their "amens." This is instead of every person praying for the same thing and thus praying the same prayer repeatedly.

Biblical prayer does not require *much speaking* (Mt. 6:7). A long prayer is not necessarily more effectual than a short one.

(4) Effectual prayer follows the lessons of Christ's model prayer (Mt. 6:9-15).

This is not a prayer to be repeated by rote. It is a model; it is a teaching tool that instructs the Lord's people in important elements of personal prayer. Christ did not say, "Pray these words," He said, "Pray after this manner."

Consider some of the lessons:

- Prayer is addressed to the Father (Mt. 6:9). Jesus taught that proper prayer is Trinitarian prayer. We pray to the Father through Jesus Christ by the empowerment and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. There are no examples in the Bible of prayers addressed to the Holy Spirit. "The greatest name of all for God is our Father, a name that implies relationship, resources, and responsibilities beyond 'all that we ask or think'" (John Phillips).

- Prayer is addressed to the Father in heaven (Mt. 6:9). God is omnipresent, but He is also seated on a throne in heaven. The very act of proper prayer focuses our attention away from this present, fleeting world to our eternal home. "Father" is a tender name, but it is also a high, honorable name. Our prayers are addressed to the Father seated on the throne of the universe.

- Prayer includes praise and thanksgiving (Mt. 6:9). The Lord's model prayer begins and ends by glorifying God.

- Prayer seeks the coming of Christ's kingdom when His will is done on earth (Mt. 6:10). This is the prayer of a pilgrim who is not at home in this present world and is looking for a heavenly kingdom (Heb. 11:13). This is the prayer of one who is looking for Christ's return. This is the evidence of a true Christian (Heb. 9:28). Note that the prayers of the saints are used by God to bring to pass His will. Compare Isa. 62:6-7; Re. 5:8. Note that the kingdom of God has not yet come to earth. It will not come through the "social-justice" work of Christians or the "spiritual warfare" efforts of charismatics. The kingdom of God will come when Christ returns and establishes it by His power (Dan. 2:44-45).

- Prayer seeks for God's will to be done (Mt. 6:10). Effectual prayer is to align my will with God's. See 1 John 5:14-15.

- Prayer involves offering requests and petitions (Mt. 6:11-13a). Note that only one small aspect of the prayer deals with physical needs. We are invited to pray for these, but they should be kept in the right place and proportion. I have observed in many churches that a large portion of prayer requests concern physical matters, such as health and employment, while only a small portion concern spiritual matters, but this reflects an upside down priority in prayer.

- Prayer should be offered daily (Mt. 6:11). God knows our needs, but He wants us to approach Him every day.

- Prayer requires that I keep my heart and life right before God (Mt. 6:12). Unconfessed sin hinders prayer. See Psa. 66:18.

- Prayer is the means of forgiveness of sins (Mt. 6:12). We come to the throne of grace to obtain mercy (Heb. 4:12).

- Prayer is for spiritual protection (Mt. 6:13). One reason why it is not easy to be persistent in prayer is that it is spiritual warfare. The devil does what he can to hinder our prayers. He uses fiery darts of unbelief (Eph. 6:16). We protect ourselves by prayer to God and by exercising the shield of faith, which is to put one's confidence in God's promises. If we leave off prayer and faith, we will be defeated.

- Prayer is confidence in God's omnipotent power (Mt. 6:13). Prayer must be based on confidence in God. Without faith it is impossible to please Him (Heb. 11:6). Effectual prayer is addressed to a God who is the eternal Creator. Satan is currently the "god of this world," but he is a usurper and his time is short.

- Christ ended the prayer with a repetition of the teaching about forgiveness (Mt. 6:14-15). Compare verse 12. Again we see that one of the chief purposes of the Sermon on the Mount was to expose hypocrisy and to lead men to salvation and "true religion." Christ's teaching on forgiveness addresses the hardness of men's hearts and the lack of compassion and mercy that resides in the fallen heart. Man's natural tendency is to be unforgiving, to hold grudges, and this is proof of his unrighteous condition and need of salvation. A merciful, forgiving spirit is the product of and evidence of regeneration.

m. Christ taught the power of fasting (Mt. 6:16-18).

(1) Elsewhere the Lord taught that fasting is an element of spiritual warfare (Mt. 17:14-21).

(2) Fasting is not commanded, but it is expected ("when ye fast," v. 16). It is mentioned 45 times in the New Testament. Paul fasted often (2 Co. 11:27).

(3) Fasting is an aspect of spiritual warfare (Mt. 17:14-21).

(4) In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ makes a specific promise about proper fasting ("thy Father, which seeth in secret, SHALL reward thee openly," Mt. 6:18). This is a great encouragement to those who fast.

n. The "single eye" and the "evil eye" (Mt. 6:19-34)

The eye in this passage refers not to the physical eye but to the heart (Mt. 6:24). The eye refers to the direction and purpose and passion of one's life, to what you love (Mt. 6:24), to what you serve (Mt. 6:24), to what is your master (Mt. 6:24). Man's heart determines what the physical eye sees, where it looks and how long it looks, and what is done with that which it sees.

(1) In the context, Christ is dealing with man's attitude toward money and possessions and the purpose of life, because money and possessions show the character of the heart.

(2) The key to understanding the passage is found in Mt. 6:31-33. Christ is contrasting how the unbeliever lives with how the child of God is to live. The unbeliever seeks his own will and is filled with care, but the child of God serves God and trusts Him and is filled with peace.

(3) Thus, to have a "single eye" is to have God first in one's heart and affections. It is to give God first place above the possessions and pleasures of this life. The "evil eye," on the other hand, is to have the heart set upon the things of this world and upon self-fulfillment above God and His will. It is to allow the world and its evil affections to take control of one's heart. This is the essence of idolatry.

(4) The single eye is necessary for spiritual growth and understanding (Mt. 6:22-23). The worldly-minded person does not have God's wisdom. It is impossible to know God rightly and to have a proper understanding of His Word when we do not walk in purity and single-hearted devotion.

(5) To not worry about things (Mt. 6:25, 31, 34) means to not worry after the fashion of the world (Mt. 6:31-34). It means that I am not to be filled with worry, but I am to serve God and put Him first and trust Him with the future.

- It does not mean that I am to have no cares. Paul had care for the churches, for example (2 Co. 11:28).

- It does not mean I am not to work. Elsewhere, the Scripture says the child of God is obligated to work (e.g., Eph. 4:28; 2 The. 3:10; 1 Tim. 6:4, 8).

- It does not mean that I am not to make any plans about tomorrow. Paul made plans (Ro. 15:23-24), but at the same time he left the future in God's hands and was content with God's will. Christ's teaching about not worrying is a warning not to be so consumed with worldly matters that these crowd God out of first place in our lives.

- An example of Christ's teaching in Matthew 6 is found in the rich man described in Christ's parable in Luke 12. His sin was not that he worked hard and laid up something for the future. His sin was that he laid up everything for himself and was not "rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

- Another example of Christ's teaching is Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38-42. Martha was filled with care because her priorities were wrong. She was doing the right thing at the wrong time. It was not time to be bustling around the kitchen; it was time to sit at Jesus' feet. Because Martha's priorities were wrong, her life was filled with care and she was fretful toward her sister. Mary, on the other hand, lived at Jesus' feet and trusted Him and was filled with peace and blessing. Cooking a meal is right at the right time, but many church members put their business before God's business, and as a result their lives aren't characterized by peace and blessing, good fruit, spiritual wisdom, and growth.

- Christ's teaching in Matthew 6:34 is a recipe for good mental health!

o. Jesus warned about hypocritical judging (Mt. 7:1-5).

(1) The warning against judging is a warning against a certain type of judging, not against *all* judging.

- It is a warning against hypocritical judging (Mt. 7:5). It is a warning against what David did when he was ready to put a man to death for a sin that was less than his own sin (2 Sam. 12:1-7). It is a warning against a parent telling a child not to do something that the parent himself is guilty of. It is warning against a preacher who preaches against adultery but is secretly having an affair with his secretary or who preaches against stealing while he is "borrowing" money from the church treasury without authority. Hypocrisy is spiritually destructive; it breeds contempt. Many Christian parents have spoiled their child training efforts by hypocrisy. Christ's warning is important because all men are naturally hypocrites (Ro. 2:1). God has written His moral law in our hearts, and though we do not obey it, we judge others by it (Ro. 2:14-15). In Matthew 7, Christ is teaching us to look in the mirror and judge ourselves before we judge anyone else, to be more severe on ourselves than on others, to get our own house in order before we criticize others. We should do this when we read the Bible and when we hear Bible teaching and preaching. I must first apply the Word of God to myself rather than first thinking about how it applies to other people.

- It is a warning against a self-righteous, critical spirit lacking in compassion and godly wisdom and patience.

(2) Christ is not forbidding all types of judgment. In the very context of Matthew 7, He tells us to examine spiritual fruit and to beware of false prophets (Mt. 7:15-16), and it is impossible to do this unless we judge the teaching and lifestyle of preachers. Other Scriptures tell us that there are things that we are to judge: We are to judge sin in the church (1 Co. 5:1-13). We are to judge matters between the brethren (1 Co. 6:1-5). We are to judge preaching to make sure that it is true (1 Co. 14:29). In fact, we are to judge all things by God's Word (1 Co. 2:15-16; 1 Th. 5:21). The context of 1 Co. 2:15-16 is the contrast between man's natural judgment and judgment by God's Word (vv. 9-14). According to Hebrews 5:12-14, judging everything by God's Word should be the daily and continual way of life for the believer. This is the path of wisdom and protection.

p. Christ warned against giving holy things to dogs and swine (Mt. 7:6).

Dogs and swine were unclean under the law of Moses (Lev. 11:1-18). They signify unregenerate Christians who profess Christ but are not changed (2 Pet. 2:22). Dogs are false teachers (Phil. 3:2-3).

Christ is teaching that His people should be very careful to discern the true character of people they deal with. We must not be gullible and easily led astray (Prov. 14:12). We can obtain discernment by the light of God's Word and the wisdom of God's Spirit.

(1) This is a warning about spending too much time and effort trying to convince a heretic of the truth, because something is wrong with him and he has set himself in opposition to the truth (Titus 3:10-11).

(2) This is a warning about yoking together in ministry with nominal Christians and false teachers. Compare Ro. 16:17-18; 2 Tim. 3:5; Tit. 3:10-11.

(3) This is a warning about receiving unsaved people into church membership. The church must be careful about receiving members. It must guard the door so that it does not become a mixed multitude. The church at Jerusalem is the example. Those who were received into membership gave clear evidence of salvation (Acts 2:41-42).

q. Christ encouraged men to seek things from God (Mt. 7:7-11).

(1) We see God's wonderful character. While He is almighty, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and thrice holy, He is also a tender Father to His creatures. He loves them and desires to save them and help them. He invites us to approach Him in prayer, to ask of Him, to knock at His door. How different this is from the "god of this world." He has no love, no compassion, no mercy, no care. His promises are lies, and his invitations bring destruction.

(2) We see man's responsibility to seek God. Compare Acts 17:26-27; Jer. 29:13.

(3) We see the importance of persistence for answered prayer and spiritual victory (Mt. 7:7-8). The verb tense is continuous. Christ is saying that if we ask and keep on asking and if we seek and keep on seeking and if we knock and keep on knocking, God will answer. We should pray until God answers or until He makes it clear that it is not His will to answer, such as in the case of Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. God requires persistence to test our faith (Heb. 11:6).

(4) We see the importance of dependency on God. It is a fundamental necessity of a victorious and fruitful Christian life. Obedience to God's commands as revealed in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in Scripture is impossible for the fallen sinner, but God has everything we need, and He is ready to supply it to those who cast themselves upon him in steadfast dependence.

r. Christ describes the royal law (Mt. 7:12).

(1) The royal law is the heart and soul of the law of Moses, which shows the impossibility of being saved by the law. The self-centered fallen sinner continually fails the law of love, whereas even one failure brings condemnation (Gal. 3:10). Thus, the law cannot bring salvation. Instead it reveals the sinner's guilt and condemnation before God and turns his attention to Christ as Saviour (Rom 3:19-24).

(2) The royal law is the heart and soul of the Christian life. Compare Romans 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-14; Jam. 2:8.

s. Christ describes the broad road and the narrow road (Mt. 7:13-14).

This is one of the most powerful and effectual descriptions of the way of salvation contrasted with the way of destruction in the entire Scripture.

(1) The wide gate and the broad way signify the way of the world.

- The wide gate signifies the multitude of false religions and philosophies. The devil has something for everyone's taste.

- The broad way is called broad because it is the way of the vast majority. Each person on this way can encourage himself that he is in good company. The truth has never been a majority position in this world since man's fall since Cain killed his righteous brother and his children spread abroad in the earth.

- The broad way leads to destruction. This is the Greek word "apoleia," which is translated "perdition" eight times (1 Tim. 6:9; 2 Pet. 3:7). It does not refer to annihilation, but to eternal punishment in the lake of fire (Re. 20:10-15).

(2) The straight gate and the narrow way signify the Christian life.

- The straight gate is repentance and faith in Christ. The gate is described as narrow and constrained, because the sinner must humble himself in repentance (Lk. 13:3, 5) and because the way of salvation is exclusive (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). The straight gate is to encounter Christ at Calvary in regenerating faith.

- The narrow way is to walk according to the New Testament Christian faith. Though it is narrow, it is full of light and blessing (Prov. 4:18).

- The narrow way is called narrow because it is the way of the few as opposed to the many. Jesus warned that few will be saved. This is comparatively speaking, meaning that far more will be lost than saved in this present world. Yet great numbers will be saved. Even the number of those saved out of the Tribulation cannot be numbered (Re. 7:9).

- The narrow way leads to life. This is eternal life, which is the free gift of God to those who receive Christ (Ro. 6:23).

t. Christ warned about false teachers and false Christians (Mt. 7:15-23).

(1) This is the first of many warnings on this topic in the New Testament. Christ and the apostles did not neglect a ministry of discernment and warning. Practically every epistle has some type of warning along this line. Compare Acts 20:28-35; 1 Co. 15:12; 2 Co. 11:1-4, 12-15; Gal. 1:6-9; 2:4-5; Eph. 4:11-14; Phil. 3:1-3, 17-19; Col. 2:8-22; 1 Tim. 1:3-11; 4:1-6; 2 Tim. 3:1-5, 13; 4:3-4; Titus 1:9-16; 3:9-11; 2 Peter 2; 1 John 2:18-29; 4:1-6; Jude 3-20. They taught us to be continually on guard against spiritual deception. To beware of and warn about false teachers is a fundamental aspect of the Christian life and ministry. This is not a secondary issue. It is not a "non-essential."

(2) False teachers are deceptive (Mt. 7:15). They try to appear to be something that they aren't. In this, they are both deceiving and being deceived (2 Tim. 3:13), meaning that they themselves are deceived by the devil, even while they deceive others. Many passages in the New Testament warn of the deceptive character of false teachers. Compare Mt. 24:4-5; Gal. 2:4; Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:8. Any person can be deceived, so we must be very careful.

(3) False teachers are known by their fruits (Mt. 7:16-18). The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth (Eph. 5:9). The fruit of a false teacher is particularly his doctrinal heresies (Acts 20:30; Ro. 16:17; Gal. 1:6-7; 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 4:1-2).

(4) Christ ends this section with a sharp warning about unsaved Christians (Mt. 7:21-23). This is the product of false teaching.

- False Christians can do many things that appear to be the truth (Mt. 7:22). They talk about Jesus; they call Him Lord; they preach and teach in Jesus' name; they do miracles; they do many good works.

- The main thing that is usually missing is a personal relationship with the true Christ (Mt. 7:23). Observe that the people described here by Christ hold to a false gospel. The evidence is that they boast in their own works rather than in a confidence in Christ's atonement alone. I have seen this in interviews I have conducted at ecumenical conferences I have attended with press credentials. I have asked attendees, "When were you born again," and rarely have I gotten a Scriptural answer. Many reply along the lines of, "When I was baptized," or, "When I joined the church," or, "When I had a charismatic experience," or, "I've always been a Christian," or, "I'm a third generation Christian," or, "I am not sure."

u. Christ concludes with the parable of the two houses (Mt. 7:24-27).

Every individual must make a decision about Christ and His Words. He was not just a good teacher and a holy man and a great religious leader. He claimed to be God.

(1) There is a house of obedience (Mt. 7:24-25).

- This is the individual, the home, the church, the institution, the nation that receives Jesus as Christ, as Lord and Saviour, submits to Him, obeys Him, follows Him. Note that the blessing is not for those who merely profess Christ, but for those who obey Him.

- The storms cannot destroy this house. Nothing in this world can destroy those who are built upon Christ. He is the Rock. The god of this world can roar and rampage, but he cannot destroy God's true people. Their eternal foundation, which is Christ Himself, stands sure. Compare Romans 8:35-39.

(2) There is a house of disobedience (Mt. 7:26-27).

- This is the individual, the home, the church, the institution, the nation that rejects Jesus Christ and His words. The Lord was dogmatic about this and allowed for no exceptions. Any doctrine, philosophy, religion that is built upon anything other than Jesus Christ and the Bible rightly divided will be destroyed.

- Houses built on sand can stand as long as the final storm doesn't come. As long as death does not come and take the soul to its eternal destiny, as long as the final judgment doesn't come, that house can appear to be alright. It can be wealthy, prosperous, and respected in the eyes of the men of this world, but it will soon fall.

- The fall of the house built on sand will be great (Mt. 7:27). Nothing could be greater, as it consists of eternal destruction in the lake of fire! And there is no hope for the house built on sand once the storm of judgment comes and takes it away. There is no second chance after this life to reconsider one's folly and to receive Christ.

v. Christ taught with authority because He was certain of what He was saying (Mt. 7:29).

The scribes did not teach with authority because they were teaching man's traditions rather than the sure Word of God. They were teaching, "This rabbi says this, and that rabbi says that."

Every preacher should preach with authority (2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 2:15; 1 Pet. 4:11). How can we be sure of our teaching and authoritative in our preaching?

(1) We must found our teaching on Scripture alone (John 8:31-32; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). We need the help of God-called teachers (Eph. 4:11-12), but we must test every teacher and every teaching strictly by God's Word.

(2) We must obey that which we learn (John 7:17; 2 Tim. 2:19).

(3) We must be diligent students (2 Tim. 2:15). It is impossible to know the truth rightly without diligent study. It is impossible to test and discern error without first knowing God's Word.

(4) We must separate from error (2 Tim. 2:16-21). Association with false teaching brings confusion, doubt, and error.

Matthew 8-9 Messianic Miracles

Christ's Miracles: An Overview

There are many miracles in this passage - healing of the leper (Mt. 8:3); healing of the centurion's servant (Mt. 8:5-13); healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mt. 8:14-15); casting out devils and healing all that were sick (Mt. 8:16); raising the ruler's daughter from the dead (Mt. 9:18-26); healing the woman who touched His garment (Mt. 9:20-22); healing the two blind men (Mt. 9:27-31); healing the dumb man who was possessed (Mt. 9:32-34); healing the multitudes (Mt. 9:35).

1. Consider the purpose of Christ's miracles.

   a. They were done to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Consider John 5:36; 10:25, 37-38; 14:11; 15:24; 20:30-31; Acts 2:22. The Old Testament prophesied that there would be miracles in the kingdom of God (Isa. 29:18; 35:5).

   b. Christ's miracles were not done as an example for believers to follow. According to Pentecostal-charismatic teaching, Jesus performed miracles as an example for Christians to follow. For example, at a charismatic conference in New Orleans in 1987, I heard Pentecostal Larry Lea say that we need a "red letter" Christianity, referring to the words of Christ in the Gospels that are printed in red ink in some Bibles. He was saying that Christians should perform the same miracles we read about in the Gospels. This ignores the fact that Jesus healed and performed miracles as a sign that He was the Messiah. The miracles were part of His unique credentials as the Christ.

2. Consider the occasion of Christ's miracles. He healed publicly in natural settings. There is no example in the New Testament of a special healing crusade.

3. Consider the characteristic of Christ's miracles (Mt. 8:16-17):

   a. Christ had power over every enemy of man: sin, disease, demons, death, and nature (Mt. 8:16).

   b. Christ healed all who came (Mt. 8:16). Unlike charismatic and Pentecostal "healers," Christ never failed to heal when He attempted to do so.

c. Christ's healings were immediate and permanent. Many of those healed by the most famous Pentecostal healers died after their "healings." (For extensive documentation of this see the book *The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements: The History and the Error*, available from Way of Life Literature.)

4. Matthew 8:16-17 and Isaiah 53:4 are proof texts used by Pentecostals to support the doctrine that Christ guarantees physical healing by His atonement, but this is not supported by Scripture.

a. Matthew says that Jesus accomplished this in His earthly life rather than in His death.

b. For the Christian life, Peter applies this to healing of sin rather than the healing of sickness (1 Pet. 2:24).

c. The physical part of our salvation is largely in the future (Ro. 8:18-23). Pentecostals/charismatics confuse the dispensations. God often heals in answer to prayer today, but there is no guarantee of healing. The apostle Paul was not healed (2 Co. 12:7-10). Neither was Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23), nor Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20).

The Centurion's Servant (Mt. 8:5-13)

1. The term "century" means 100; a centurion commanded roughly 100 soldiers and had much authority and respect in the Roman Empire (see verse 9).

2. This centurion had great faith, fully believing that Jesus could heal just by speaking a word (Mt. 8:8).

3. He understood that Jesus had the authority to do anything (Mt. 8:9). This is what it means to pray "in Jesus' name" (Joh. 14:13). It means to pray on the basis of Christ's ability and authority, not my own.

4. The Gentiles had more faith than the Jews (Mt. 8:10).

5. More Gentiles will be in the kingdom of God than Jews (Mt. 8:11-12).

6. Faith is the most important thing in the Christian life (Mt. 8:13). Compare Heb. 11:6. The devil attacks faith more than any other thing. We must use the "shield of faith" to quench his fiery darts of lies and doubt (Eph. 6:16).

Peter's mother-in-law (Mt. 8:14-15)

1. From this we see that Peter was married. Compare 1 Co. 9:5.

2. When she was healed, she was immediately strong enough to go about her normal duties (Mt. 8:15).

The "Son of Man" (Mt. 8:20)

1. This expression is used 108 times in the Old Testament.

   a. 13 times it simply means man (i.e., Psa. 8:4; 146:3; Isa. 51:12; Jer. 51:43).

   b. 93 times it refers to the prophet Ezekiel (i.e. Eze. 2:1).

   c. Once it refers to the prophet Daniel (Dan. 8:17).

   d. Once it refers to the Messiah (Dan. 7:13).

2. The "son of man" is used 81 times in the Gospels.

   a. Jesus used it as a title to identify Himself with mankind. The eternal Son of God became the Son of Man.

   b. Jesus is still the Son of Man in His glorification (Acts 7:56; Re. 1:13).

"Let the dead bury their dead" (Mt. 8:21-22)

This does not mean that it is wrong to bury one's father. Compare Ephesians 6:2-3.

1. *Christ was warning of putting one's family and worldly security ahead of God's calling*. Christ had called the man to follow Him, but instead of obeying, the man was making excuses and putting off the call. Down through the centuries many have resisted the call of God because of family ties. I am reminded of the man who led me to the Lord. When God called him to preach, his wife gave him an ultimatum that she would leave him if he did not leave off preaching. He pleaded with her to stay, but he refused to reject God's call. Eventually she did leave him and took their small son. He was brokenhearted, but he determined to continue preaching (not pastoring, but preaching on the streets, etc.). Many others, faced with such a choice, have honored their relatives above God.

2. *Christ was also warning about putting off God's call for a more convenient time*. It is so easy to excuse ourselves from the Lord's service by thinking that it will be easier to obey at a later time. "I will prepare to preach, Lord, when I can afford to do

so." "I will tithe, Lord, after I pay off my debts." "I will attend Bible School when the situation is different." "I will be faithful to the assembly, Lord, after I complete these projects and activities which require me to be away on Sundays and Wednesdays." This attitude is a deception. *It is never convenient to serve the Lord*. We must seek FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness and when we do, everything else will take care of itself (Mt. 6:33).

Calming the storm (Mt. 8:23-27)

1. This is powerful evidence that Jesus is God. Compare Psa. 65:7; 89:9; 107:29.

2. Jesus rebuked the disciples' lack of faith (Mt. 8:26). The importance of faith is a major theme of the Gospels.

3. The disciples still did not know who Jesus really was (Mt. 8:27).

The demoniac of the Gergesenes (Mt. 8:28-34)

See the Powerpoint *"Christ's Ministry on the Sea of Galilee"*

1. Consider the place where this happened.

a. Matthew calls the place "Gergesenes" (Mt. 8:28), while Mark and Luke call it "Gadarenes" (Mk. 5:1; Lk. 8:26). Gadara and Gergesa were two of the cities or towns of the Decapolis (meaning "ten cities"), and the area was called after the name of either one (*Pulpit Commentary*).

b. Since neither the demons nor the swine wanted to drown, it appears that the pigs were frightened by the demons and began running down the steep slope and couldn't stop before they reached the water. This identifies the location with precision, because there is only one place on the lake where a steep hill runs directly into the water. A Catholic monastery was built at Kursi, which is the traditional place of this event, but this place doesn't fit the Bible's description. There is a steep hill at Kursi, but it ends hundreds of yards before the lake, so if the swine ran down it, they could easily stop before running into the water and drowning. Farther south is the place where a steep hill runs directly into the sea, so there can be no doubt that this is the location of the Gospel event.

2. Consider the number of demon possessed men. By comparing the accounts in Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39, we see that there were two demon possessed men,

but the accounts focus on the healing of one of them. It is possible that only one was healed or that one was more prominent.

3. Consider Christ's great love and power. His love is evident in His care for the demon possessed, and His power is evident in His ability to deliver the man.

4. Consider man's choice. God has given man a choice whether to receive or reject Christ. When the people asked Jesus to leave, He left (Mt. 8:34; 9:1). Christ does not stay where He is not welcome. He does not force Himself on people. It is a frightful fact, evident from the beginning to the end of Scripture, that sinners can say no to God (and suffer the consequences).

5. Consider the people's folly. They cared more about the pigs and the economy than about Jesus Christ (Mt. 8:34). Instead of acknowledging the great miracle that had occurred and receiving Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, they asked Him to go away.

The man sick of the palsy in Capernaum (Mt. 9:1-8; compare Mk. 2:1-12)

1. We see the zeal, persistence, and faith of his friends (Mk. 2:2-4). It was their faith that caused them to be so zealous and persistent (Mt. 9:2). We need to have this same zeal and faith in bringing people to Christ. Again, the importance of faith is a constant theme of the Gospels.

2. We see Christ's power to forgive sins (Mt. 9:2). He does this on the basis of His own atonement.

3. We see the unbelief of the Jewish leaders. They knew that only God can forgive sins, so they charged Jesus with blasphemy (Mt. 9:3). They were correct in thinking that Jesus was claiming to be God, but they were wrong in thinking that this was blasphemy. Christ showed them that His miracles proved that He was the Son of God, but they did not believe.

4. We see that Christ knows men's thoughts (Mt. 9:4).

   a. This again shows that Jesus is God (2 Ch. 6:30).

   b. This also shows that it would have been impossible for the gospels to have been produced through natural means. Human authors can record words and deeds, but they cannot record thoughts!

The call of Matthew (Mt. 9:9-17)

1. Matthew immediately followed Christ when he was called (Mt. 9:9).

2. He also brought his friends to Christ (Mt. 9:10).

3. In what sense did Jesus eat with sinners (Mt. 9:11)? He loved them and sought to preach the gospel to them, but He did not bring His lifestyle down to their level. He ate with sinners, but He did not sin with sinners. Compare Heb. 7:26. Jesus was not partying with sinners; He was witnessing to them. See His reply in Mt. 9:12-13. Calling sinners to repentance is not a party message! Those who are comfortable partying with the world are not following Christ's ways. Peter said that God's people must not party with the world, and because we don't party with the world, the world ridicules us (1 Pet. 4:3-4). I experienced this when I got saved and stopped partying with my old friends and instead called them to repentance.

4. Jesus told John's disciples that He was going to start something new, referring to the church (Mt. 9:14-17). The church is a different institution and program than Israel.

The ruler's daughter (Mt. 9:18-26)

1. As He went to the man's house, Jesus was interrupted by the diseased woman (Mt. 9:20).

2. Jesus said the girl was not dead, because all are alive before God. Compare Mt. 9:24 with Mt. 22:32.

3. Again we see Jesus' compassion, wisdom, and power. We see Him giving the clear evidence that He is the Messiah.

4. Why do Mark (Mk. 5:22-23) and Luke (Lk. 8:41-42) say that the daughter was not yet dead when the ruler first approached Jesus?

a. It appears that Matthew summarizes the entire event. By comparing the accounts, it appears that the following occurred:

(1) The ruler of the synagogue first came to Jesus and stated that his daughter was near death and urged Jesus to come with him to heal her (Mark 5:22-23; Luke 8:41-42).

(2) As the Lord Jesus was traveling to the ruler's home to minister to the girl, he was hindered by the throng of people and by the woman who was healed by touching him (Mark 5:23-34; Luke 8:43-48).

(3) As Jesus was thus delayed, someone came to them from the ruler's house and notified them that the girl had died (Mark 5:35; Luke 8:49).

b. It is also possible that the words in Matthew 9:18, "my daughter is even now dead," merely generalize the situation. The words could mean that she was at the very point of death when he left her and he was certain she was dead by that time.

The woman who touched Jesus (Mt. 9:20-22)

1. She had been diseased for 12 years and had spent all her money on doctors. Compare Mk. 5:26. Doctors and medicine can be a blessing, but we must trust God and look to Him for our help.

2. She had faith that Jesus could heal her, and He said that it was her faith that brought the healing (Mt. 9:21-22). Again we see an emphasis on the importance of faith.

3. She was completely and permanently healed (Mt. 9:22). Again we see the power and love of Christ. He took time to deal with every person who approached Him.

The two blind men (Mt. 9:27-31)

1. They approached Jesus as the Son of David, the promised Messiah (Mt. 9:27).

2. They asked for mercy, acknowledging their sin before God. Old Testament prophecy said the Messiah would be merciful and would help the needy (Psa. 72:12).

3. Jesus did not answer them immediately, but they were persistent (Mt. 9:27-28). This is a fundamental aspect of answered prayer.

4. Jesus continually emphasized the importance of faith (Mt. 9:28-29).

5. Jesus instructed them to keep silent about the healing (Mt. 9:30). He was perhaps doing this as a judgment against Capernaum's unbelief. Compare Mt. 11:23.

6. It was impossible, though, for the formerly blind men to keep their healing a secret (Mt. 9:31)!

The dumb man who was possessed (Mt. 9:32-34)

1. Christ was rejected by the nation's leaders. They had been given perfect and complete evidence that Jesus is Christ, but they blasphemed by saying that He cast out devils by the power of the devil.

2. Notice the difference between the reaction of the common people and that of the leaders. Religious leaders have greater accountability (James 3:1), but every person is responsible to follow the truth and to test things by God's Word and not to blindly follow their rulers.

3. Though the people seemed to believe in Jesus, actually they believed in Him as a great prophet and as a Messiah that would deliver them from Rome, and later the multitudes turned away (John 6:66).

The multitudes (Mt. 9:35)

1. Jesus was very busy, preaching in all of the towns and cities. He was never idle, sitting around doing nothing. He redeemed the time of His short sojourn on this earth.

2. He preached the "gospel of the kingdom." This is explained in Mt. 10:7. It was the announcement that the promised kingdom was at hand.

3. Jesus healed every sickness and disease. He gave clear and irrefutable evidence that He was the Messiah. The nation had no excuse. No other man has done anything like this.

Jesus instructs us to pray for laborers (Mt. 9:36-38)

1. Jesus had great compassion upon people even in their sin and unbelief (Mt. 9:36).

2. The harvest is always great, because God has commanded that the gospel be preached to every person (Mk. 16:15) and wants every person to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4).

3. Only God can raise up qualified laborers for the harvest, and He does it in answer to prayer (Mt. 9:38). This is one of the things that God has specifically told us to

pray for; surely He is ready to answer. Our church has been praying for this in every main service for the last several years, and God has answered in a wonderful way. We train the workers He raises up and send them out into the harvest fields under His direction.

Matthew 10 Apostles are Commissioned

1. When we pray for laborers to be sent, we must be ready to go! The disciples had just been instructed to pray for laborers for the harvest, and it is interesting that the very next thing we see is that they themselves are being commissioned to go.

2. Christ had first trained the apostles by His instruction and example. This is the pattern for church workers throughout the church age (2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 1:9).

3. The names of the 12 (Mt. 10:2-4)

a. Simon Peter, son of Jonas

b. Andrew (Simon's brother)

c. James (son of Zebedee, son of Thunder, Mk. 3:17)

d. John (son of Zebedee, son of Thunder, Mk. 3:17)

e. Philip

f. Bartholomew

g. Thomas (called Didymus, Joh. 11:16)

h. Matthew (Levi the son of Alphaeus, Mk. 2:14)

i. James the son of Alphaeus

j. Lebbaeus Thaddaeus (also called "Judas the brother of James," Lk. 6:16 and "Judas not Iscariot" Joh. 14:22; author of the book of Jude)

k. Simon the Canaanite (also called "Zelotes," Lk. 6:15; "Canaanite," which is Hebrew, and "Zelotes," which is Greek, mean the same thing: to be a zealot for a cause)

l. Judas Iscariot (son of Simon, Joh. 6:71)

4. This commission is different from the one given to the churches. Pentecostals have claimed that this commission is what Christians are to do today, but that is to confuse dispensations:

a. They were not to preach to the Gentiles (Mt. 10:5-6). Contrast Mk. 16:15.

b. They were to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 10:7). This was the message that the king was present and the kingdom was therefore near, but the Christian's message is found in the Great Commission (Lk. 24:47).

c. They were to do miracles (Mt. 10:8).

(1) There is no command in the church's Great Commission to do miracles. The apostles did miracles, but nowhere are the churches commanded to do miracles.

(2) What about Mark 16:15-18? There is no commandment here to do miracles. Christ says that miracles will be done, and they were done by the apostles as recorded in the book of Acts. Compare Mark 16:19-20 and Hebrews 2:3-4.

(3) There is a difference between "sign gifts" or sign miracles that were associated with the apostles and general miracles that God does in all ages. The Lord has continued to do miracles throughout the church age (such as healing in answer to prayer, James 5:14-15), but such miracles are not the same as the apostolic sign miracles. If there were no major difference between sign miracles and general miracles, then the apostolic miracles could not have been "signs" (2 Co. 12:12).

d. They were not to take any money or provisions (Mt. 10:9-10). Christ later changed this commission (Lk. 22:35-36). Paul took wages from the churches (2 Co. 11:8).

5. Are there apostles today like the 12 that Christ ordained?

a. Revelation 21:14 says there are only 12 apostles. When Judas died, the apostles selected another man to take his place as the twelfth in Acts 1, but after that no further apostles were selected.

b. No one today has seen the resurrected Christ, which was a requirement for an apostle (1 Co. 9:1).

c. No one today has the signs of an apostle (2 Co. 12:12).

There are apostles today in a more general sense. The New Testament uses the same Greek word, *apostolos*, to refer to church messengers (2 Co. 8:23). In this sense, there are apostles today, but not in the sense of the twelve.

6. Note that men will be held accountable for the light that they have (Mt. 10:14-15). Gospel preachers are Christ's ambassadors, and men are responsible for what they hear from them.

7. Matthew 10:17-42 has a two-fold application: for the church age and for the Tribulation period.

a. Verse 23 says the preaching that began in Mt. 10 will be continued until Christ's return. The church age forms a parenthesis between Christ's offer of the kingdom to Israel in the early chapters of Matthew and the preaching of the kingdom again in the Tribulation. During the Tribulation, Jewish evangelists will preach the same message as Mt. 10:7, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," in announcing the Lord's soon return. Revelation 7 describes the ordaining of 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Re. 7:9-14).

b. This is called the "prophetic perspective," meaning that near and far events are often included in the same prophecy. Compare Isaiah 9:6. Christ's first coming and second coming are mentioned in this one verse.

8. Matthew 10:19-20 does not mean that preachers should not study and prepare for their messages. Compare 2 Timothy 2:15. It means that in times of persecution God will give extra wisdom and help.

9. Matthew 10:22 does not mean that salvation is by enduring. That would be salvation by works and it would contradict the clear teaching of the New Testament gospel (i.e., Joh. 6:28-29; Ro. 4:1-8; Eph. 2:8-10). What enduring to the end means is that those who are saved will continue to serve the Lord even during the most terrible trials. The endurance is the evidence of salvation. This is "the perseverance of the saints." Those who have true faith continue with the Lord. Compare Joh. 6:66-69; 10:27; Heb. 3:14; 6:9; 10:38.

10. Believers will not be respected and loved by this world (Mt. 10:24-25). When believers and churches seek the acclaim of the world, it is to their downfall. We are pilgrims and strangers in a foreign world, and we must not be surprised at this world's animosity.

11. Matthew 10:28 is not teaching that the wicked shall be burned up in hell. Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses teach annihilation of the wicked, but Revelation 14:10-11 and 20:10 teach eternal torment. It is not only the "smoke of their torment" that is eternal; it is the torment itself.

12. Matthew 10:29-31 --

a. We see God's tender love for His children and intimate interest in every tiny detail of their lives (Mt. 10:29-31). If God knows the details of a sparrow's life, how much more does He know the details of the lives of His people!

b. We also see that animals are not the same as man.

(1) In Genesis 1, man is the only creature said to be made in God's image (Gen. 1:26). Animals were made for man, but man was made for God.

(2) God cares for all of His creatures, but He cares more for man.

13. We see the importance of public confession of Christ (Mt. 10:32-33). Those who claim to be "secret believers" are on dangerous ground. Compare Luke 9:26; 2 Tim. 2:12. Romans 10:9-10 teaches that saving faith is a confessing faith.

14. Jesus did not come the first time to bring peace, but a sword (Mt. 10:34).

a. The peace movement is based on a wrong interpretation of the Bible. The United Nations building has a statue in front of its headquarters with the words "swords into plowshares." This confuses the dispensations. The time when swords will be turned into plowshares is at the end of the age when Jesus returns (Isaiah 2:4).

b. During this present age, there will be no peace. Compare 1 Th. 5:3. In fact, at the end of this age, God will call upon the nations to turn their plowshares into swords for the final war (Joel 3:9-16).

15. Christ's addresses discipleship (Mt. 10:35-39).

a. The disciple of Christ is the true believer.

(1) Salvation and discipleship are two different things, but they are closely associated and not so sharply divided as is commonly taught today. Saving faith *produces* discipleship. Discipleship is the evidence of saving faith. The New Testament associates saving faith with following and obeying Christ in an intimate way. See John 10:25-28; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 1:16; 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-3. Take Ephesians, 2:8-10, for example. It is common to quote verses 8-9 when sharing the gospel, but those verses cannot be divorced from verse 10. Verses 8-9 is salvation, but verse 10 is the evidence of salvation. The individual who has the reality of verses 8-9 will have the reality of verse 10.

(2) In the context, Christ was showing true salvation as opposed to the nominal faith of the crowds. We see this more clearly in the Gospel of John. See John 2:23-25. Many believed because of Jesus' miracles. They were not believing on Him as Lord and Saviour. They wanted a king. And in John 6, those crowds turned away from Jesus because of His hard teaching about discipleship. See John 6:66-69.

(3) There is no example in the New Testament of a true believer who is not also a disciple of Christ. In every case of the true believer, there is a dramatic change so that the individual becomes a follower of Christ.

(4) We are not saying that every true believer is a disciple 100%, that he is totally sold out to God's will in every matter.

- Discipleship, as with every aspect of the Christian life, is a matter of growing. The true believer doesn't have perfection in anything, including his level of discipleship. But every true believer is a disciple *at some very real and discernible level*. We see this in Peter's life. When he answered Christ's call and left his nets, he was a disciple of Christ. That was evident to everyone who knew him. But he learned many things along the way and made many hard decisions. He even rebuked Jesus (Mt. 16:21-23) and momentarily denied Jesus (Mt. 26:69-75). But through it all he grew and became a stronger and more devoted disciple. He was a disciple, but he grew in discipleship.

- To say that the true believer is 100% a disciple is an error. This does not take into account the necessity of spiritual growth, and the potential for backsliding, and the choices the believer must make in surrender. For example, in Romans 12:1-2 Paul beseeches the believer to surrender to God's perfect will. Obviously, then, there is a sense in which the true believer might not be fully surrendered to God's will. Some require that Christ be "100% Lord" of an individual before they will accept him as saved. One mark of such a ministry is that many people who were counted as true believers and showed some evidence of salvation again see themselves as lost and make a new profession of faith. I recall a missionary named Honeycutt in Singapore who had that type of ministry. A large percentage of people who sat under his preaching "got saved" again. If an individual had struggles with some sin or had doubts about his salvation, he was considered lost and was encouraged to seek a fuller repentance. Several missionaries that I knew

from Nepal visited Honeycutt's ministry and "got saved again." Some of the people from Honeycutt's ministry visited my wife when she was in the hospital in Bangkok having our third child in 1983, and they tried to make her doubt her salvation because she was physically stressed and mentally depressed. But there is no such thing as lordship perfectionism in this present life. The true believer confesses Christ as Lord (Ro. 10:9) and is converted and changed and becomes a follower of Christ, but his discipleship will not be 100% in this present life. Any saint who is honest before God knows that there are areas of his life that are not 100% under Christ's Lordship. Spirit-taught wisdom is required to understand these things and to deal with people properly about salvation and sanctification.

b. Christ calls His people to 100% discipleship.

(1) The believer is not to continue to live his own life and do his own will. He is called to surrender his life to the Lord's will without reserve. He is to love Christ more than any earthly relationship.

(2) In Mark 8:35, the call of Christ is to lose one's life for "the gospel's sake." The work of the gospel is Christ's great program for this age, as repeated in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20, and Acts 1. Every believer is an ambassador of Christ for the gospel's sake, and every believer should be engaged in this business and should find his place in this business.

16. The believer's authority is seen in Mt. 10:40. We are Christ's ambassadors (2 Co. 5:20).

17. God's reward toward those who assist in His work is described in Mt. 10:41-42.

a. God's rewards are great, even to those who assist preachers in their work (Mt. 10:41).

b. God's rewards are for those who serve Him even in the smallest way (Mt. 10:42).

Matthew 11 Christ Praises John and Rebukes Israel

Christ praises John the Baptist (Mt. 11:1-15)

Lessons

1. The best of saints can have moments of doubt and discouragement (Mt. 11:2-3).

2. Christ manifested Himself by His miracles (Mt. 11:1-6). Compare Isa. 61:1; 42:6-7; Joh. 20:30-31.

3. John was the fulfillment of prophecy.

   a. John was the fulfillment of Malachi 3:1 (Mt. 11:9-10).

   b. John was the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5 (Mt. 11:14). The nation did not receive Christ; therefore, Elijah will still come. John came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Lk. 1:17).

4. John was great but less than those in the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 11:11). Consider some lessons about this:

   a. This tells us that the kingdom of heaven was yet future to John's day. He was not in it. Jesus and John had announced the kingdom if Israel would repent and receive it, but they rejected the message (Mt. 11:13-14).

   b. This might refer to the greater standing and gifts that are possessed by the child of God in the church.

      (1) We have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

      (2) We are adopted children (Eph. 1:5).

      (3) We have the indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14).

      (4) We are seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6).

   c. John was not in the church. Though John laid the foundation for the formation of the church, he himself was not a part of it. He is a transitional figure.

5. What does Mt. 11:12 mean?

a. It refers to persecution against the truth by the religious and political leaders. The truth about the kingdom was being proclaimed, but the violent religious leaders were trying to force their own will on God's kingdom. John was in prison and would soon be beheaded; Jesus would soon be crucified and the disciples persecuted.

b. It might refer to the crowds who wanted to force Jesus to be their king (Joh. 6:15).

c. It might refer to the preaching of the kingdom and the rush of people to hear. Compare Lk. 16:16. "Another view is that the expression 'suffereth violence' in Matthew 11:12 means that the kingdom was forcing itself upon men's attention and that forceful one's were laying hold of it. In other words, the kingdom was being preached with convincing power, starting with John the Baptist" (John Phillips).

Christ rebukes unbelieving Israel (11:16-27)

Some Lessons

1. Jesus not only loves men and desires to save them, but He will also judge those who reject Him.

a. Mt. 11:20 "began he to upbraid." The Greek word translated "upbraid" is a strong term. It is also translated "cast in teeth," "reproach," "revile."

b. Mt. 11:21 "woe" - Jesus pronounced "woe" 31 times in the Gospels.

2. Jesus was a forceful preacher who often preached on hell -- Mt. 11:23 "brought down to hell."

3. That generation was likened to children who pout when others will not do what they want them to do (Mt. 11:16-19). Children want others to play their games by their rules. Likewise, instead of measuring things by the Word of God, the Jews were following their own thinking, tradition, and religion. The result was that they rejected the truth.

4. Miracles do not produce faith (Mt. 11:20). Compare Lk. 16:27-31. In this we see the error of the Pentecostal-charismatic movement, as well as the Third Wave movement led by John Wimber, C. Peter Wagner, and others, who claim that effective evangelism must be accompanied by miracles.

5. Men will be judged by the light that they have (Mt. 11:22, 24).

6. It appears that there are degrees of punishment in hell (Mt. 11:22, 24).

7. God gives all men some light, but He is not under obligation to give them more if they do not respond to that which they have.

a. All men have the light of creation (Ro. 1:18-20).

b. All men have the light of conscience (Ro. 2:14-15).

c. But all men do not have the light of the Scriptures (Ro. 3:1-2), which is the greatest light.

d. There is evidence in the Bible that if men live up to the light they have, that God sends them more light (i.e., Cornelius in Acts 10:1-6).

8. God is glorified in those who believe and in those who do not believe (Mt. 11:25-26). Compare 2 Co. 2:14-16.

9. The proud of this world have rejected God, and God has rejected them (Mt. 11:25-26).

a. This does not mean that God "sovereignly" rejects some and accepts others. Compare Mt. 13:14-15.

b. These verses cannot be isolated from the context of the rest of the Bible, which says that God offers salvation to all men (Re. 22:17) and that He desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4). We see this in the next verse (Mt. 11:28), which is an invitation for "all" to come.

c. In Mt. 11:27 Jesus is not saying that salvation is limited to a few who are preordained. He is saying that any man who is saved is saved by the grace of God. By comparing other passages, we see that Jesus will reveal the Father to every man who believes on him. Compare John 6:37 and 40.

Christ invites the weary (Mt. 11:28-30)

Even though the majority rejected Christ, individuals are invited to receive Him. Christ's message is no longer for Israel only.

Lessons

1. Christ's salvation is for all men, not merely a pre-chosen few. Anyone who is weary and heavy laden is invited to come. That is the broadest possible invitation

and encompasses all sinners! What a wonderful Saviour! If someone thinks that Christ's salvation is not for them, all they have to ask themselves is, "Am I weary and heavy laden? Well, then, Christ has invited me to come and find rest!"

2. Salvation is not difficult. It is described as recognizing one's need and coming to Christ for help.

3. Salvation is all of Christ. The weary sinner does not have to do anything except come and receive rest and learn of Christ. Of course, if the sinner sincerely turns to Christ, he is also turning from his false gods and saviours and from the life of self-rule, which is repentance.

4. There are two rests promised in this invitation, referring to position and practice:

a. The rest of salvation (Mt. 11:28 "I will give you rest). This is a gift and is eternal and unchanging.

b. The rest of service (Mt. 11:29 "ye shall find rest"). This is changeable because it depends upon my walk with Christ.

5. In Christian service, Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light! Christ is pulling the yoke with me. He is really carrying the load. Compare Galatians 2:20. If I grow weary in serving the Lord, it is because I am not walking closely with Him and leaning on Him. I am serving Him in my own strength and following Him afar off.

6. Serving and learning go together. We need to study and grow in knowledge, but we also need to obey those things that we learn.

a. Serving without learning easily results in falling into error.

b. Learning without serving becomes dry and lifeless and results in pride of scholarship.

Matthew 12 Rejection of Christ

This chapter describes a great turning point in Christ's earthly ministry. In spite of His sign miracles, Jesus is rejected as the Christ once and for all by the Jewish leaders (Mt. 12:14, 24).

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Mt. 12:1-8)

1. The Pharisees had exalted their traditions above the Word of God (vv. 1-2). The Old Testament law does not forbid men to pick and eat corn on the sabbath.

2. Jesus refused to submit to their unscriptural traditions and He corrected them with the Scripture (Mt. 12:3-5).

   a. He pointed out that David even ate the shewbread when he was hungry and in need (Mt. 12:3-4).

   b. He pointed out that the priests in the temple work on the sabbath (Mt. 12:5). Compare Num. 28:9-10.

3. Jesus claimed to be greater than the temple and the sabbath (Mt. 12:6, 8)!

   a. To the Pharisees, those were the most holy things in the earth, and they were greatly offended at Jesus' claims.

   b. This is another of the many times that Jesus claimed to be God.

4. Jesus reminded them that God is more concerned about obedience and mercy and right relations between men than He is about religious ceremonies (Mt. 12:7). Compare 1 Sam. 15:22; Psa. 51:16-17; Prov. 21:3; Isa. 1:11-17.

The healing of the withered hand (Mt. 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Lk. 6:6-11)

1. It was the sabbath day, and Jesus was teaching in the synagogue (Lk. 6:6).

2. The Pharisees were watching him to see if He would heal (Lk. 6:7).

   a. The law of Moses did not forbid man to heal on the sabbath.

b. The Pharisees had added many laws to God's sabbath law. Since the law said no work was allowed, the Pharisees said that healing also was not allowed. This rule was invented to spite Jesus, since no other man had ever healed on the sabbath!

3. Jesus knew their thoughts (Lk. 6:8).

a. Again, this shows that He was God (2 Ch. 6:30).

b. This also reveals the supernatural inspiration of the Gospels, because no mere human biographer or historian could know what Jesus and the others were thinking.

4. Jesus reasoned with them from Scripture and from common sense (Mt. 12:11-12).

5. Jesus was angry with them because of the hardness of their hearts (Mk. 3:5). Christ's anger was righteous in that He was angry against sin.

6. Jesus then ignored their tradition and offended their religious sensibilities and healed the man (Mt. 12:13).

7. The Pharisees were "filled with madness" and plotted to kill Him (Lk. 6:11). This was the fierce, unreasonable wrath of men who have set themselves against the truth.

Jesus again heals the multitudes (Mt. 12:15-21)

1. The multitudes came from many places (see Mk. 3:7-8).

2. He healed them all (Mt. 12:15).

3. The demons were saying, "Thou art the Son of God" (Mk. 3:11), but He commanded them not to make Him known (Mk. 3:12; Mt. 12:16).

4. This was in fulfillment of Isaiah 42:1-4 (Mt. 12:17-21).

a. Jesus was not a rebel; He was not on earth to stir up a revolution against the government (Mt. 12:19).

b. Jesus is patient and merciful to the very weakest person (Mt. 12:20).

c. Jesus can never fail and will have complete victory ultimately (Mt. 12:20).

d. Jesus is the Saviour of all mankind, not just of the Jews (Mt. 12:21).

Open rejection of Christ (Mt. 12:22-45)

1. This is called the "unpardonable sin" and the "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 12:31-32). We will learn the nature of this sin by examining the context, which is the proper way to interpret the Bible.

a. In the context Jesus had claimed to be greater than both the temple and the sabbath (Mt. 12:6, 8). These were things in which the Jews gloried, and Jesus' claim enraged them. Lk. 6:11 says the Jews were "filled with madness."

b. In the context, Jesus had done a great miracle (Mt. 12:22-23), thus proving that He was the Messiah. Compare Isa. 35:5-6.

c. The Jewish leaders rejected both Christ's claims and His miracles, attributing them to the devil (Mt. 12:24).

d. Thus, in the context, the sin Jesus referred to in Mt. 12:31 is the sin of rejecting Him as Lord and Saviour. It is the sin referred to in Hebrews 10:26-29. The sin of "trodding under foot the Son of God and counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing." That is exactly what most of the Jews did, both before and after His crucifixion.

e. In a general sense, it is the sin of rejecting Jesus as Christ.

2. Consider some other lessons from Christ's sermon:

a. Truth is evidenced by its fruit (Mt. 12:33). Those who claim they know Christ but live wicked lives are deceived. Compare Titus 1:15-16; 1 Joh. 2:3-4.

b. Jesus was a very plain-spoken preacher (Mt. 12:34).

c. Jesus warned that men must have a change of heart (Mt. 12:35). The life can be changed only by a change in heart. This requires the miracle of the new birth.

d. Jesus warned about idle words (Mt. 12:36-37). In the context, Christ is talking about words against the Holy Spirit.

(1) Jesus is describing the Great White Throne judgment. Man will give account for every word: every lie, every curse, every blasphemy, every word of hate, every filthy word. There is therefore no possibility of salvation apart from Christ. To break the law in even one point is to break all of it (Jam. 2:10). We see this judgment in Revelation 20:11-15.

(2) The believer will not be judged at the Great White Throne. His sin is blotted out by Christ's blood (Col. 2:13). The believer's judgment is not to condemnation (1 Co. 3:11-15).

3. Jesus warned about looking for signs and miracles (Mt. 12:38-41).

a. He said it is a wickedness to look for and require signs. Faith does not come by signs; it comes by hearing God's Word (Ro. 10:17).

b. He said that the account of Jonah was true (Mt. 12:40-41). Anyone who questions the historicity of Jonah is rejecting the testimony of Jesus Christ.

c. Jonah was a type of Christ's death and resurrection (Mt. 12:40). This means that it was not possible that Christ died on Friday. From Friday afternoon to Sunday morning is not three days and three nights. We believe that He died on Wednesday afternoon. Since the Jewish day began at evening, Wednesday evening and day was day one, Thursday evening and day was day two, and Friday evening and Saturday was day three. Christ rose sometime Saturday evening, which was the beginning of Sunday by Jewish reckoning.

4. Jesus mentioned the queen of the south (Mt. 12:42).

a. This is the queen of Sheba mentioned in 1 Kings 10. She traveled from the south, from Sheba in southern Arabia.

b. Christ is telling us that she believed in Jehovah God. Otherwise how could she condemn the unbelieving Jews?

5. Jesus warned about demons being cast out and then returning (Mt. 12:43-45).

a. In the context, Christ is talking about that generation in Israel (Mt. 12:45).

b. This truth about demons is why there are no instructions in the New Testament epistles about how to cast out devils. They are cast out properly through prayer and the preaching of the gospel, whereby sinners are set free eternally from the power of the devil (Col. 1:13). We have seen many demon possessed people delivered, and it happens like this: Through prayer (often accompanied by fasting, Mt. 17:21) the demon possessed person is delivered enough from his affliction to hear and understand the gospel. If he receives Christ as Lord and Saviour, he is permanently delivered from the demons.

6. Jesus' relationship with His mother and brethren (Mt. 12:46-50).

a. Mary had other children after Jesus. She was not a "perpetual virgin" as the Roman Catholic Church claims.

b. Jesus did not give His relatives according to the flesh favored status above the spiritual realm (Mt. 12:48-50). Too many believers have stumbled by giving more respect to their relatives after the flesh than they should (Lk. 14:26). We should respect our fathers, for example, but we should not obey them when they are trying to keep us from serving Christ. Husbands should love their wives, but not if that means to stop following Christ in some area in which He has plainly commanded us. Wives should honor and obey their husbands, but not if the husband forbids the wife to serve Christ. Parents should love their children, but they should not respect their children more than God, like Eli did (1 Sam. 2:29-30).

c. It is not the natural lineage that is most important, but the spiritual. There is a song that is sung at birthdays that illustrates this. It begins with the traditional birthday greeting. "Happy birthday to you/ happy birthday to you/ happy birthday, dear -------/ happy birthday to you." It ends with this spiritual challenge: "Happy birthday to you/ only one will not do/ born again means salvation/ how many have you?"

Matthew 13 Mysteries of the Kingdom

Mysteries of the Kingdom: The Course of the Church Age (Mt. 13:1-52)

Jesus got into a fishing boat and preached to the people who were on the shore. A likely location is a cove near Tabigha that forms a natural amphitheater not far from Capernaum.

See Map 07 - *Christ's Early Travels 1*

For photos of this place see the PowerPoint *"Christ's Ministry on the Sea of Galilee."*

1. The background of the parables

a. Jesus came and presented Himself to Israel as the promised Messiah and King (Mt. 1-10). We know that Jesus did not come to establish the Messianic kingdom; He came to die for man's sin; but He did present Himself as the Messiah, knowing that He would be rejected. His rejection was necessary for the fulfillment of prophecy and the completion of the atonement (Isa. 53:3).

b. He was publicly rejected by Israel's leaders and representatives (Mt. 11-12; see especially 12:22-28).

c. Christ then offered Himself to anyone who would come--Jew or Gentile. It was not until Matthew 11:28-30 that Christ made this offer.

d. Having been rejected by Israel, Christ reveals the "mystery" period of the kingdom (Mt. 13:11). This is a special group of parables (Mt. 13:53). They reveal the mystery form that the kingdom of God will take during the church age. They begin with the sowing of the seed and end with judgment.

(1) A New Testament "mystery" is truth that is hidden in the Old Testament and revealed in the New. See Ro. 16:25-26; 1 Co. 2:7-10; Eph. 3:3-6.

(2) The term "mysteries of the kingdom" in Matthew 13:11 refers to the course of the church age. This age was not foretold in Old Testament prophecy and is thus called a "mystery." See Mt. 13:35. Old Testament prophecy saw the first and second comings of Christ, but it did not see the church age lying between these great events. The church age is like a valley

in between mountain peaks. The floor of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal is about 4,500 feet high. Looking north you can see mountains at the edge of the valley that are about 10,000 feet. Beyond that you can see the peaks of the central Himalayan mountain range that rise to over 25,000 feet. It looks like the high peaks are immediately behind the near mountains, but in fact there are unseen valleys in between. Likewise, the Old Testament prophets saw the peaks of the first and second coming of Christ, but they did not see the valley of the church age in between. Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom revealed that Christ would suffer (Isa. 53) and would reign (Isa. 9:6-7). Nothing is mentioned, though, about a period of time in between these two great events in which God would temporarily set aside the nation Israel and build the church composed of Jews and Gentiles brought together into the same mystical body.

2. The purpose of the parables

Jesus taught these parables to reveal the truth of the church age to believers and to hide it from unbelievers (Mt. 13:10-17).

a. Jesus did not teach in parables to make the truth simple, as many have claimed, at least not in this case. He taught these parables to hide the truth from willful unbelievers.

b. It is important to note that God does not "sovereignly" blind some while opening the eyes of others. It is those who do not receive the truth who are blinded. Jesus says that Israel closed her own eyes (Mt. 13:15). Man is responsible to hear and understand God's Word. Compare Eze. 12:2; 2 Co. 4:4; 2 The. 2:11-12.

3. The general message of the parables

They describe the course of the church age as that of increasing apostasy and error until the whole is leavened (Mt. 13:33). The whole will be leavened when the saints are raptured and the Great Whore of Revelation 17 will rule with the Antichrist. "To say that our Lord speaks of the church in these parables would be incorrect. He speaks of what we term today 'Christendom,' the sphere of Christian profession" (Gaebelein's *Annotated Bible*).

4. The meaning of the individual parables

The Lord interprets the first two parables, and this interpretation is the key to understanding the rest. The field is the world. The man (sower, the purchaser of the field, the merchantman) is Christ. The seed is the gospel. The soil is the hearts of men. The birds are demons.

THE SOWER (Mt. 13:3-9, 18-23)

Compare Mark 4:14-20; Luke 8:11-15.

Main Message: The gospel will be preached to all nations and resisted by the devil. There are two parallel programs operating during the church age: God's program of world evangelism, and the devil's program of "the mystery of iniquity" (2 Th. 2:7). The latter is the devil's program to destroy the gospel and to put the man of sin on the throne of the world.

a. The seed is the gospel, which we are to preach to every creature and which is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe (Mark 16:15; Ro. 1:16).

b. The gospel falls upon different types of soil--signifying people and nations. Only a small part falls on good soil. Most men will not be saved. Though all men are sinners, all men do not respond to the gospel in the same way. We should preach the gospel to every person but focus our attention on those who are responsive. It is like fishing. I try to present my bait to every fish in the lake, but I pay most attention to those that bite!

c. Only a small part of the seed falls on good soil. Most men will not be saved. Jesus said "few there be that find it" (Mt. 7:13-14).

d. Salvation requires understanding the Word of God (Mt. 13:19, 23). No one can be manipulated into salvation if he is not willing to listen to the gospel. If an individual is not willing to read a gospel tract or invite a Christian into his home to teach him, he cannot be saved. On the day of Pentecost, the people were willing to hear Peter preach to them in many words (Acts 2:40-41). The Ethiopian Eunuch was reading the Scripture and trying to understand it when God sent Philip to help him, and they rode together for some time while Philip instructed him (Acts 8:26-31). Cornelius was willing to call Peter and hear what he had to say (Acts 10). When Paul preached in Athens, some wanted to hear more (Acts 17:32). No one can be saved who isn't willing to give attention to the gospel.

e. The devil is very aggressive in trying to keep people from Christ (Mt. 13:19). Compare Mark 4:15 "Satan cometh immediately." But he can't keep people

from believing unless they do not want to believe (2 Co. 4:4). Man's will is the key. Evangelism is spiritual warfare, and the evangelist must have on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:19-18).

f. The one who falls away does not have saving faith. Compare Hebrews 10:38-39. The "root" in verse 21 is Christ. See Isa. 11:1, 10; 53:2; Re. 5:5; 22:16. A profession of faith is always tested to determine its character. In our years of missionary work, we have seen large numbers of people become very interested in the gospel, then turn away from Christ because of persecution.

g. Even a true Christian can be unfruitful if he is not careful about how he lives (Mt. 13:22). I believe that this verse can be applied to an unsaved person who falls away as well as to a saved person who does not bear the fruit he could have because of his carelessness.

(1) *The danger of care* (Mt. 13:22). Care is dangerous when it hinders the individual from serving the Lord or when it causes him or her to disobey the Bible. Care comes to every person in this present world, but we must cast our care upon Christ and trust and obey Him (1 Pet. 5:7). Compare Matthew 6:30-33. God will take care of us if we put Him first. Care can cause an individual to neglect the assembly or to yoke together with an unbeliever in a business in order to make money. It can cause him not to be able to concentrate on studying the Bible and meditating on it "day and night" (Psa. 1:2). Care can cause the individual to become offended at God for allowing problems to come into his life or perhaps to become offended at the church for not helping him, so that he stops seeking and serving Christ. We see in this parable that Christians are not exempt from troubles. God allows us to be subject to troubles in order to try our faith and to produce spiritual growth (Jam. 1:2-4).

(2) *The danger of riches* (Mt. 13:22). Riches are deceitful because they offer the promise of happiness and satisfaction in life, but they do not fulfill that promise. The pursuit of riches has destroyed many (1 Tim. 6:9-10). Consider, for example, the "get rich quick" schemes that have trapped so many people. "Many people have seemed to say yes to Christ, only to lose sight of spiritual things when worldly advancement beckons. Perhaps a promised promotion at work cuts right across a dawning conviction that one should become a preacher or a missionary. Or business booms at the cost of neglecting the gatherings of the Lord's people" (John Phillips).

(3) *The danger of pleasure* (Lk. 8:14). It is not wrong to have pleasure, as God has given us all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). But it is wrong to have pleasure that interferes with my relationship with and service of the Lord. For example, many have put sports and other things before being faithful to God's house, learning His Word, and pursuing His will. And sinful pleasures have allured many souls into moral destruction.

h. The fruit bearers (Mt. 13:23)

(1) True believers bear fruit. This is an evidence of their salvation (John 15:1-2). The true believer hears Christ's voice and follows Him (John 10:27). Does this mean that those who are choked in verse 22 aren't saved? It is possible. I know of many professing believers who don't bear fruit for one reason or another. They are church members, but they don't grow, don't serve, don't bear fruit. This is very dangerous ground to be on, because it is very possible that it means they haven't been born again.

(2) Believers bear different amounts of fruit depending on their zeal for serving Christ. Each believer should aim for 100% fruit to the glory of Christ. 100% fruit is for those who are 100% sold out to the Lord and 100% passionate in seeking God's will.

(3) Bearing fruit is not by self-effort nor is it by merely "resting" or waiting on God. See John 15:3-4; Mt. 11:28-30; Gal. 2:20. It has been rightly said that we must work as if everything depended upon us and trust God as if everything depended upon Him.

(4) Understanding the Word is necessary for bearing fruit ("heareth the word, and understandeth it," Mt. 13:23). The Bible is the Word of God that produces fruit in the believer's life, but it must be read and studied and understood. It requires learning how to study, learning sound principles of Bible interpretation, learning how to use Bible study tools. The believer who is lazy in regard to learning God's Word will never bear much fruit.

(5) Christian growth requires honesty (Lk. 8:15). Contrast guile (Psa. 32:1-2; John 1:47). Contrast hypocrisy (Ananias and Sapphira). There are those who seem to understand the gospel and who say the right things but their lives don't match their words.

(6) Christian growth requires patience (Lk. 8:15). Growth doesn't come quickly; many trials have to be endured.

THE TARES (Mt. 13:24-30; 36-43)

Main Message: The devil will raise up false Christians and corrupt churches alongside of the truth.

a. We see the sower, who is Christ (Mt. 13:37). Believers are ambassadors for Christ, but it is Christ who is actually doing the sowing of the gospel and the miracle work of salvation.

b. We see the enemy (Mt. 13:24, 38-39). He is called the enemy, the wicked one, and the devil. He is opposed to God and to Christ. He is the god of this world and blinds the minds of those who do not believe the gospel (2 Co. 4:4). He is active in resisting the gospel everywhere in the world and throughout the age. He is a liar and a deceiver and a corrupter. He cannot destroy the wheat, but he can introduce tares.

c. We see the slumber (Mt. 13:25). God's people must stay alert and vigilant against the devil's activity (1 Pet. 5:8). Church leaders must be vigilant to guard the door of church membership from unregenerate professors and the church from every type of error.

d. We see the wheat and the tares. False Christians and true will grow together in the world during this age.

(1) The wheat is a beautiful picture of true believers.

- Wheat doesn't form deep and permanent roots into the earth. Likewise, believers are pilgrims in this present world.

- Wheat is an annual crop. Likewise, believers have been continually harvested from the earth since Pentecost.

- Wheat dies downward as it ripens upward (Phillips), and the believer is to die to this world and set his affection on things above (Col. 3:1-4).

- Wheat absorbs the sun and bears physical fruit in its grain, and the believer takes in God's Word and bears spiritual fruit.

- Wheat bows its head as it bears fruit, as the believer lives his life in continual worship to God.

(2) The tare looks like wheat but it has a different character. This is a picture of those who profess Christ but are not born of the Spirit. In some ways they act like true believers, but they don't bear the fruit of a true believer. It is by the fruit that wheat can be distinguished from the tare. The grain of a tare is not a sweet, edible fruit. Jesus taught that those who do not bear fruit are false (Joh. 15:1-2, 6).

(3) The wheat and tares growing together in the world depict the two programs that operate side by side in the church age. The devil's program of the mystery of iniquity (2 Th. 2:7) works alongside the Lord's program of the Great Commission (Acts 1:8). Both will operate until the Rapture of New Testament saints. At that point the mystery of iniquity will hasten on to its end by the revelation of the antichrist and by his ultimate destruction in the lake of fire.

e. We see the harvest. The tares are not destroyed until the end of the age (Mt. 13:30). The church age has an end. Today is the day of salvation, but the opportunity will not last forever.

(1) This does not refer to sin and error in the churches but to sin and error in the world ("the field is the world," Mt. 13:38). Thus the ecumenical interpretation is wrong. Many misuse this parable to teach that we should not exercise discipline or separate from false Christians, but that we should wait for the Lord to do the separating. The New Testament epistles plainly instruct us to put away those who sin in the churches (1 Co. 5) and to mark and avoid those that teach false doctrine and that follow false forms of Christianity (Ro. 16:17; 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 3:10-11).

(2) This shows that Rome's practice of persecuting and destroying those she considered false in "Christendom" was wrong. Churches have no authority to punish sinners in the world.

(3) The parable is a severe warning to nominal Christians. False Christians like Judas can sometimes deceive the saints, but they cannot deceive God. He knows His own (2 Tim. 2:19). The believer proves his saving faith by his changed life. Good works are not the way of salvation, but they are the evidence of salvation (1 John 2:3-4).

THE MUSTARD SEED (Mt. 13:31-32)

Main Message: The parable of the mustard seed becoming a tree depicts the true church of Jesus Christ experiencing abnormal growth and becoming the home of evil things in apostasy.

a. The seed of the mustard plant signifies New Testament churches as founded by the apostles. They are small and weak and unimpressive in the eyes of men, but they are strong in faith and in God's power. Compare Matthew 17:20 where the mustard seed is likened to faith in God's Word. The church at Philadelphia epitomized the true church -- "for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Re. 3:8).

b. The tree depicts the weak, despised churches becoming large and impressive through the process of apostasy. The mustard plant becomes "a great tree." See Luke 13:19. While it is true that the mustard plant that grows wild in Israel can become a large shrub, it does not become a great tree. This is a description of unnatural growth. It is a description of apostasy, as the Roman Catholic Church and her daughters turned the simple "religion" of Christ into one of worldly grandeur, with popes and archbishops and bishops and priests and liturgy and sacraments and cathedrals and gold and veneration of the saints and pilgrimages and ambassadors to the nations.

c. The birds that lodge in the tree have already been interpreted as evil in the Parable of the Sower. Compare Matthew 13:4 with verse 19. They are demons and professing Christians and teachers controlled by demons. Compare I Timothy 4:1 and 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. The simple church that Christ established has become one of the largest *religions* in the world, full of demonic teaching and practices.

THE HIDDEN LEAVEN (Mt. 13:33)

Main Message: Christianity will gradually increase in error until it is entirely apostate - "Till the whole was leavened."

a. The three measures of meal picture Christ and His Word and His doctrine. It reminds us of the three measures of the meal offering (Num. 15:9).

The fine flour depicts Christ's pure, perfectly balanced character.

The absence of leaven (Lev. 2:11) depicts Christ's sinless nature.

The oil poured on the flour (Lev. 2:15) depicts the Holy Spirit (Joh. 3:34).

The frankincense (Lev. 2:15) depicts the sweet odor of Christ's life before the Father (Mt. 3:17).

The three measures depict the Trinity dwelling in fullness in Christ (Col. 2:9).

b. The woman pictures false teachers, for the woman is not supposed to teach (1 Tim. 2:12). The false religious system in Revelation 17 is pictured as a woman. Paul warned that evil men and seducers shall increase throughout the church age (2 Tim. 3:13). Spiritual error will progress until "the whole" of "Christianity" is leavened.

c. The leaven signifies false doctrine (Gal. 5:7-9) and sin in the churches (1 Co. 5:6-8). The churches are to continue in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42; 1 Co. 11:1-2). Jesus warned of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees (Mt. 16:6). The leaven of the Pharisees was to add human tradition to God's Word, which we have today in the form of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and cults such as Mormonism. The leaven of the Sadducees was skepticism. They did not believe in angels and the resurrection. We have this today in the form of theological modernism. Leaven also depicts that which is pleasing to the natural man. "When sourdough is added to meal, the result is appetizing. Flour by itself has little taste, but when yeast is added, the dough becomes light and savory. Christianity, however, was never designed to delight the flesh any more than unleavened bread at passover was supposed to be tasty. On the contrary, God called that bread 'the bread of affliction' (Deu. 16:3)" (John Phillips). Contemporary Christianity attempts to make the things of Christ appealing to the natural man. It downplays the necessity of repentance and self-denial. It is "seeker friendly." Toward this end it uses worldly music and dress and entertainment to "jazz up" the gospel, but it is apostasy.

THE TREASURE HID IN A FIELD (Mt. 13:44)

Main Message: This parable depicts Christ's purchase of and preservation of Israel and the kingdom of God (Ex. 19:5; Psa. 135:4).

a. The field is the world. Compare Mt. 13:38.

b. The treasure is the kingdom of God which has been hid in the world in the form of Israel. "On this planet God intends to display His royalty. His kingdom is to be located here by deliberate design, as part of His eternal plan (Mt. 25:34). God's plans for our planet have centered in the nation of Israel ever since the

days of Abraham. God selected the children of Israel to be His people, put them in the land He is pleased to call His land and gave them a capital city He calls the city of the great king (Psa. 48:2). For a brief while the planned kingdom became openly visible as God raised up David, placed him on an everlasting throne (2 Sa. 7:8-17), and crowned him with glory and honor. ... The Old Testament kingdom had at best been a shadowy picture of the ultimate Messianic kingdom. ... In the mind of God, however, the kingdom still existed and with the advent of Christ it could come into its own. ... The treasure of God's kingdom on earth was here all the time, but it was quite unsuspected by most" (John Phillips).

c. The man who found the treasure is Christ, the Son of God who became flesh.

d. Christ bought the field with His precious blood (1 Pet. 1:19). Like Boaz, Christ became the kinsman redeemer. He was rich but He became poor that He might be the Redeemer (2 Co. 8:9). He bought the treasure with joy ("for joy thereof," Mt. 13:44). Compare Heb. 12:2.

e. Christ has re-hidden the treasure during the church age (Lk. 19:42; Ro. 11:25-26).

f. One day He will uncover and take possession of the treasure. This is described in Revelation 5-6, where Christ takes the scroll from the Father's hand and opens the seals. The scroll contains the title deed to the earth and the plan for the establishment of Christ's kingdom. Christ will judge the world and return to sit on its throne.

THE MERCHANT SEEKING GOODLY PEARLS (Mt. 13:45-46)

Main Message: This parable depicts the purchase of the church.

a. The merchant is Christ. He is the one who seeks and saves sinners, and He has been doing this ever since Adam fell.

b. The pearl is the church. The only other mention of a pearl in Scripture is Re. 21:21, which refers to the pearls from which the gates of the New Jerusalem are fashioned. The pearl was not considered of value to the Jews just as they did not value the Gentiles, but Christ valued them.

c. The price for the pearl was Christ's atonement on Calvary (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

THE NET (Mt. 13:47-50)

Main Message: This parable looks to the end of the age at the return of Christ and the separation of the wicked from the righteous in preparation for the establishment of Christ's kingdom. The sea represents the Gentile kingdoms, just as it does in Revelation where the antichrist comes out of the sea (Re. 13:1). The parable looks at the same event as Mt. 3:12; 13:40-42; 25:41; Re. 14:9-11. Those who receive the mark of the beast and those who do not receive the message of the Jewish evangelists described in Revelation 7 will not enter into Christ's kingdom.

Consider some lessons from this parable:

a. Angels will be active in the establishment of Christ's kingdom in a visible way. In the church age, angels are active but their activity is largely hidden from the eyes of men. Even if we meet them, we are unaware that they are angels (Heb. 13:2).

b. Hell is a place of fiery judgment. This is repeated and emphasized in Scripture, and Jesus warned about hell fire more than any other Bible preacher. The fire of hell is mentioned about 20 times in the Gospels.

THE HOUSEHOLDER (Mt. 13:51-52)

Main Message: Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are for church-age believers. Though the church is not under the Old Testament covenant, we learn lessons from the Old Testament (1 Co. 10:11; Ro. 15:4).

Jesus Returns to Nazareth (Mt. 13:53-58)

See Map 08 - *Christ's Early Travels 2.*

1. Jesus was not accepted in His own home town (Mt. 13:57). This reminds us of the saying that "familiarity breeds contempt."

2. Jesus had brothers and sisters (Mt. 13:55-56). Mary was not a "perpetual virgin" as Rome falsely teaches.

3. It is unwise to be offended at Jesus (Mt. 13:57; 11:6). Whatsoever Jesus does and says is right and true! He is the absolute Standard of the truth.

4. Unbelief limits and hinders the work of God (Mt. 13:58).

Matthew 14 Death of John the Baptist

John's death (Mt. 14:1-12)

1. This was a further rejection of Jesus as the Christ, for it was John who identified Him as such.

2. Most people are like Herod who lived his life believing false things (Mt. 14:2).

3. John plainly rebuked sin and this got him in trouble (Mt. 14:3-4). Compare Ephesians 5:11.

4. Women who are offended at God's Word can be very angry and cruel and can hold their offense for a long time (Mt. 14:3-8).

5. Sensual dancing and partying are evil influences in this world.

a. Drinking is not specifically mentioned in Matthew 14, but we know that Herod was a lover of wine. A piece of pottery from a wine jug was found at Herod's palace in Masada inscribed "To Herod King of the Jews." Other wine containers were inscribed with the name C. Sentius Saturninus, who was the Roman consul in 19 BC. Modern commercial wines and alcoholic beverages have a higher alcoholic content than Herod's.

(1) Wine is a mocker (Prov. 20:1). It is not possible to know if you will control it or it will control you. Many people who tried to drink in "moderation" have become drunkards. Recently a prominent pastor was arrested for drinking under the influence of alcohol and lost his ministry. He had taught that drinking in moderation is acceptable. Abstinence is the only safe position.

(2) Wine changes the heart and produces moral reprobation. When men and women are under the influence of alcohol, they do things that they would not otherwise do (Prov. 23:29-35).

b. When women are dancing sensually and men are looking upon them to lust after them, this is adultery (Mt. 5:28).

6. Herod was fickle and was controlled by the fear of man (Mt. 14:5, 9). The fear of man is a snare (Prov. 25:29).

7. God, not Herod, was in control of John's life, (Ro. 8:28). When our work is finished, God calls us home.

Jesus heals another multitude (Mt. 14:13-14)

1. Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee to a desert place (Mt. 14:13).

2. Jesus had compassion on them, even though He knew that most of them were only seeking healing and were not wanting to be saved from their sin (Mt. 14:14).

3. Jesus healed *all* of their sick (Mt. 14:14).

Feeding the 5,000 (Mt. 14:15-21)

1. This is a great miracle that is recorded in all four Gospels. Compare Mk. 6:32-44; Lk. 9:12-17; Joh. 6:1-14.

a. The multitude was composed of 5,000 men plus women and children (Mt. 14:21).

b. There were five loaves and two fishes (Mt. 14:17).

c. Twelve baskets full of fragments were left over (Mt. 14:20).

2. There were at least two feedings of multitudes, as we will see when we come to Matthew 15:32-39. The number of people was different as was the number of baskets left over. There were possibly other miraculous feedings that the Gospels do not record. See John 21:25.

3. The feeding of the 5,000 took place on a mountain (John 6:3) in the vicinity of Bethsaida (Lk. 9:10).

See Map 08 - *Christ's Early Travels 2*.

For photos see the PowerPoint *"Christ's Ministry on the Sea of Galilee."*

a. The place is described as "a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida." That would indicate that it was somewhere in the vicinity of the ancient city of Bethsaida on the northeastern point of the lake.

b. Immediately after the feeding of the 5,000, the disciples were sent "to the other side," which was Genesaret (Mt. 14:22, 34). John says they "went over the sea toward Capernaum" (John 6:17). This would further indicate that the feeding occurred on the east side of the lake.

4. Spiritual lessons

a. Jesus is God. This is one of the sign miracles that proved that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

b. Christ can supply all of His people's needs in any circumstance (Heb. 13:5-6).

c. The supernatural provision was done in such a way that it is impossible to know exactly when the loaves and fish were multiplied and how the miracle was done (Mt. 14:19). I have experienced this many times when I have stepped out by faith to do God's will. He has always provided, but looking back it is not always possible even to recount how He did it.

d. In this situation, Christ was testing the disciples' faith (Mt. 15:32).

Peter walks on the water (Mt. 14:22-33).

This was another lesson about faith.

1. Peter's faith was in the Word of Christ (Mt. 14:28-29). Compare Ro. 10:17.

2. Peter was successful in his walk of faith until he took his eyes off of Jesus and began to look at the circumstance (Mt. 14:30).

3. Jesus reproved Peter for having little faith (Mt. 14:31).

a. In man's eyes, Peter had great faith to be able to do such a thing even for a short distance, but in Jesus' eyes, his faith should have been firm and unwavering. We should believe that God can do anything (Jer. 32:17; Lk. 1:37).

b. Wavering in faith is dangerous spiritually (James 1:5-8). God's Word never encourages or praises unbelief. There is never a good excuse for unbelief.

Jesus heals more multitudes (Mt. 14:34-36).

1. They did not believe in Jesus as the Son of God; they believed in Him more as a healing prophet. They had a superstitious belief that if they could touch His garment they could be healed. In reality, they needed only His Word.

2. Christ's healing power

a. Jesus healed all those who touched Him. There is no record in the Bible that He ever failed to heal anyone. He healed all of the diseased in that entire area (Mt. 14:35).

b. He healed them perfectly, not partially (Mt. 14:36).

Matthew 15 Additional Miracles

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their hypocrisy (Mt. 15:1-20).

1. The Pharisee's error: His error was not his zeal to obey the Scriptures in all points. That is a slander that is commonly stated by the contemporary ecumenical crowd. When a Christian today is zealous to obey the Bible, properly interpreted, and to avoid all things that are wrong according to the standard of God's Word, he is charged with being a Pharisee, but this is a false charge. The Pharisee's error was as follows:

a. The Pharisee placed his own tradition above the Bible (Mt. 15:3, 9). The Pharisees even contradicted God's commandments and overthrew God's commandments with their tradition. Christ used the example of the custom of *corban*. Compare Mk. 7:13. Corban, meaning gift, was the Jewish custom of devoting one's property to God. The Pharisees taught that it was acceptable for sons to dedicate their property to the temple even if they did so for the purpose of not taking care of their parents. If the parent asked for help, the Jewish son could say, "It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me" (Mt. 15:5). The child was saying to the parent, "Whatever help you are asking from me is devoted to God, so you cannot have it." This type of thing came from a very hard and unloving heart, but the practice was supported by the Pharisees. Yet the heart of God cares more for honoring parents and caring for one's fellow man and loving God in sincerity and truth than for making religious offerings and vows (1 Sam. 15:22; Psa. 51:15-17; Prov. 21:3; Mt. 5:23-24). An example of this today would be a wife who neglects her duties to her husband and children in the name of serving the Lord. Pentecostal preacher Aimee Semple McPherson abandoned her husband in order to preach. This is *corban*. God's Word instructs the wife to be a keeper at home, to love her husband and children (Titus 2:4-5), but this law is made of none effect if a wife and mother neglects her family for the sake of "serving the Lord."

b. The Pharisee was a hypocrite, preaching to others but not obeying the teaching in his own life (Mt. 15:7-8).

c. The Pharisee rejected the gospel of the grace of God and sought righteousness by the law instead of by faith (Ro. 10:1-4). Thus he preached a false gospel and was self-righteous. We see this in Luke 18:9-14.

d. The Pharisee focused on the external things and neglected the spiritual; he looked on the outside rather than the heart (Mt. 15:10-11, 17-20).

e. The Pharisee focused on the smaller things to the exclusion of the bigger things (Mt. 23:23). We see two lessons from this verse.

(1) Not everything in the Word of God is of *equal* importance. For example, the Bible's teaching on salvation is more important than its teaching on hair in 1 Corinthians 11.

(2) Everything has *some* importance. Paul taught Timothy to respect every commandment of God's Word (1 Tim. 6:14). The context in 1 Timothy is practical church doctrine, which is typically despised by ecumenical types. Paul praised Corinth for keeping all of the ordinances (1 Co. 11:2). This included Paul's teaching on hair. These less weighty doctrines are not to be ignored and despised as the Christian rock crowd treats them, but they are to be given their proper place in the Christian life and ministry.

f. The Pharisee rejected Jesus as the Messiah. This is the main characteristic that we see in the Gospels.

2. The heart of man (Mt. 15:17-19)

This is a key passage of Scripture on the human heart, moral purity, and sanctification. It contains fundamental teaching about human nature. It is necessary for a proper worldview. Failure to receive Christ's teaching has resulted in error in every false religion and philosophy that is based on humanistic thinking rather than God's Word. On the tombstone of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan are the words, "I know in my heart that man is good..." That is contrary to the teaching of the Bible.

a. Man's heart is evil because of the fall. This is described in Genesis 3. Adam's sinful nature passed to all men (Ro. 5:12).

b. The fallen human heart is the source of evil in individuals and in mankind as a whole. Man's words and acts are evil because his heart is evil. Compare Jeremiah 17:9.

(1) Man does not merely do acts of sin; he is by nature a sinner.

(2) Man's fundamental problem is not his social or cultural environment or anything external. The problem lies in his own heart. The first murderer, Cain, had never seen anyone commit a murder and was not compelled to do this evil act by anything in his environment. The wicked deed came from his fallen heart, and he was held responsible for the choice (Gen. 4:1-12).

c. Man is not morally polluted by external things, such as failing to engage in ritual washings (Mt. 15:20) and by diet. He is morally polluted by his own wicked heart.

d. Man cannot be purified by external factors, because these things cannot affect the condition of the heart (Col. 2:20-23; Heb. 13:9).

e. Man's heart is purified by the gospel, by believing in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour (Acts 15:8-11). When an individual receives Christ, he receives the indwelling Holy Spirit, Who imparts holiness, wisdom, comfort, and spiritual strength.

f. Even after salvation, the old nature remains and the believer has an internal conflict (Gal. 5:16-18). The way of sanctification is to walk according to the Spirit rather than the flesh. This means to yield to the Spirit's control through obedience to the teaching of the New Testament faith rather than to the control of the flesh. This is described as putting off the old man and putting on the new (Eph. 4:22-24). The nature that the believer feeds and the nature to which he yields is the one that dominates his life.

Healing the Canaanite woman's daughter (Mt. 15:21-28)

This occurred in the region of Tyre and Sidon. After Jesus is rejected by the Jewish leaders, He goes to the Gentiles.

See Map 09 - *Christ's Later Ministry.*

1. This woman was a Gentile, a Canaanite who heard of Jesus and came to seek His help.

2. Her daughter was afflicted by a devil (Mt. 15:22).

3. She addressed Jesus as "Lord, the son of David," which would mean that she had faith in Israel's prophecies about the Messiah (Mt. 15:22). Whereas Jesus' neighbors

at Nazareth only believed that He was the "the carpenter's son" (Mt. 13:55-56), this Gentile woman believed in Him as the promised Messiah.

4. The account teaches the importance of persistence in prayer because faith is tested.

a. She first addressed Jesus in Mt. 15:22, and He did not answer (Mt. 15:23).

b. She next addressed the disciples, who tried to get Jesus to send her away (Mt. 15:24).

c. She then came again to Jesus and worshipped Jesus, but He reminded her that she was outside of Israel's covenant (Mt. 15:25-26). He was telling her that she was undeserving and without hope, which is the true condition of every sinner who comes to God. No man can be saved unless he humbles himself as a needy sinner.

d. She replied yet again in a humble manner, and Jesus praised her and healed her daughter (Mt. 15:27-28). Instead of being offended and proud, like many would have been, she displayed humility and surrender to God.

5. Jesus praised her faith and healed her daughter. She was healed completely that very hour. This is the nature of Messianic miracles.

Multitudes more are healed (Mt. 15:29-31)

Christ continues to perform the miracles that infallibly mark Him as the Messiah. Great multitudes brought all of their sick to Jesus, and He healed every person of every kind of sickness. There is no example in the Gospels of Jesus failing to heal.

Feeding the 4,000 (Mt. 15:32-39)

1. This is a different occasion than the scene in Matthew 14.

a. In Mt. 15, the number of men is 4,000 (15:38), whereas in Mt. 14, the number was 5,000 (14:21).

b. In Mt. 15, they had seven loaves and a few fishes (15:34), whereas in Mt. 14, they had five loaves and two fishes (14:17).

c. In Mt. 15, there were seven baskets full left over (15:37), whereas in Mt. 14 there were 12 baskets full left over (14:20).

2. The feeding of the 4,000 occurred on the east side of the lake after Jesus returned from Tyre and Sidon. The traditional place is probably the correct location.

For map and photos, see the PowerPoint *"Christ's Ministry on the Sea of Galilee."*

3. We see lessons about Jesus Christ:

a. We see Christ's compassion (Mt. 15:32). Pagan gurus try to get something from the people, but Christ is the Great Shepherd who loves the people and blesses them.

b. We see Christ's power as the Creator.

c. We see that Christ tests the faith of His people. The disciples had seen Jesus feed the 5,000 and do every sort of miracle, yet they did not believe that He could feed the 4,000. Every situation in life is a test of faith for the child of God.

4. After feeding the 4,000, Jesus went to Magdala on the west side of the lake (Mt. 15:39).

See Map 09 - *Christ's Later Ministry.*

Matthew 16 First Mention of the Church

The Pharisees seek a sign (Mt. 16:1-4)

1. The Pharisees show their stubborn blindness and hard-hearted wickedness by seeking a sign in spite of the countless signs Christ had already given (Mt. 16:1).

2. Jesus reminds them that they had been given every possible sign (Mt. 16:2-3).

3. He rebukes them for seeking a sign (Mt. 16:4). The righteous do not seek signs; they live by faith (Ro. 1:17). Many seek signs today, claiming that if they see a miracle they will believe.

4. He tells them that He will only give them the sign of Jonah (Mt. 16:4), which meant that He would be three days and three nights in the earth (Mt. 12:39-40). We looked at this in the study on Matthew 12.

Jesus warns of the false doctrine of the Pharisees (Mt. 16:5-12)

1. Jesus warns of false doctrine and calls it "leaven" (Mt. 16:6).

   a. Jesus taught that doctrine is important and that false doctrine is to be rejected.

   b. Like leaven, false teaching will spread if it is not dealt with. Preachers cannot ignore it. It must be dealt with by correction, rebuke, discipline, and separation.

   c. The apostles taught the same thing; they also called false doctrine "leaven." Compare Galatians 5:9.

2. The disciples misunderstood Jesus because they were not walking by faith, and Jesus reproved them for this (Mt. 16:7-11). He did this several times (Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31). A believer cannot understand God's Word properly if he is walking in the flesh and not the Spirit. See 1 Co. 3:1-2 and Heb. 5:11-14.

Jesus first mentions His Church (Mt. 16:13-20).

1. The church is not mentioned in the Gospels until after Christ was rejected by the Jewish leaders in chapters 11-12. The nation Israel will now be put aside, so to speak, while God turns His attention to building the church by calling Gentiles from every nation through the preaching of the gospel (Ro. 11:25-27).

2. Who is the rock of the church (Mt. 16:18)?

The rock is not Peter but Christ.

a. The context tells us that the rock is Christ. Peter had just said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16).

b. The Greek words in the passage tell us that Christ is the rock. Peter is called "petros" which is interpreted in John 1:42 as "a stone." It refers to a stone or a piece of a rock. (*Cephas* is the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek *Petros*.) The rock upon which the church is built is called "petra" or a large rock.

c. Peter himself tells us that he is a stone in the living church and that Christ is the chief corner stone (1 Pet. 2:5-6).

d. Paul tells us that the rock is Christ (1 Co. 10:4).

e. In the Old Testament, The rock is God (Psa. 18:31), and it would be blasphemous to apply this to Peter.

3. Lessons about the church from this passage. (By the "law of first mention," we can learn much from this passage.)

a. The church was established by Christ and belongs to Christ -- "I will build" (Mt. 16:18). It is His idea, His program, His plan. In Revelation, John sees the resurrected Christ standing in the midst of the churches, to watch, direct, protect, and judge (Re. 1:12-13). The church is a divinely established institution. Church work is the most serious business in the world.

(1) Man does not have authority to change the biblical plan and program of the church.

(2) Man is warned about defiling the church. Each Bible-believing church is the temple of God, and we are warned not to defile it (1 Co. 3:16-17).

b. The church did not begin in the Old Testament and is different from the nation Israel.

c. The church will not be overcome -- "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18).

(1) The church in its fulness is already seated victoriously in heavenly places in God's eyes and cannot be overcome; it shares in Christ's resurrection power (Ephesians 1:18-23; 2:4-6).

(2) The gospel has the power to save souls from hell and eternal judgment. The figure is that of the church attacking the gates of hell and prevailing over them. It is the figure of the church on the offense through the preaching of the gospel, snatching souls from Satan's grasp and from eternal destruction. Ancient cities had strong gates that had to be conquered by an enemy.

(3) This also means that true churches will continue to exist throughout the church age in spite of the spread of apostasy. Nothing can prevail against them because Christ is with them (Mt. 28:18-20).

4. What are the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 16:19)?

a. The keys refer to the gospel, which opens the door of salvation to men.

(1) The Pharisees took away the key of knowledge (Lk. 11:52), meaning they did not teach the people the truth about God and salvation.

(2) A key speaks of a door. Jesus is the door to eternal salvation (Joh. 10:9; Acts 14:27).

(3) The key to that door is the Gospel (Acts 15:7-9; Ro. 1:16).

b. Peter opened the gospel to all three major groups of men:

(1) Peter used the keys at Pentecost for the Jews (Acts 2).

(2) Peter used the keys for the Samaritans (Acts 8).

(3) Peter used the keys for the Gentiles (Acts 10).

Jesus foretells His death and resurrection (Mt. 16:21-27).

1. Jesus waited until after He had been rejected by the Jewish leaders to announce His death to the disciples.

2. Jesus foretold His resurrection. This is the evidence that He is the Son of God. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, He would have been a deceived man or a liar and not a great teacher.

3. Peter rebuked the Lord (Mt. 16:22)! He and the other disciples thought that Jesus would establish His kingdom at that time. They did not understand that He first had to suffer for our sins.

4. Jesus strongly rebuked Peter (Mt. 16:23). Satan cannot possess a believer, but he can influence him. This might have been a major step in Peter's denial of Christ. He might have been angry and frustrated at Jesus.

5. Jesus said that every disciple must give up his life for God's will (Mt. 16:24).

a. What does this mean?

(1) To "take up the cross" refers to surrender. It means that I die to my will and my plans and my desires and surrender to the will of Christ.

(2) To "take up the cross" means to surrender to the work of the gospel. Compare Mark 8:35; 10:29. It is for the gospel's sake that we leave houses and lands and loved ones. Every believer is called to the work of the gospel as an ambassador for Christ (2 Co. 5:17-20). Every believer must get busy in this work and find his place in this world, for it is a worldwide work (Mt. 28:18-20).

(3) To "take up the cross" refers to living as a pilgrim in this present world. It means that I recognize that this world is at enmity with God and is under His judgment. Every believer must choose between loving this world and loving Christ (Mt. 6:24; Jam. 4:4-5).

b. Can a true believer lose his soul? In this passage, Jesus did not say that a true believer can lose His soul. When He said that those who love and seek after this world will lose their souls, He is not talking about those who are saved. He is warning those who are in danger of choosing this world instead of Christ. Multitudes have committed this fearful sin. They hear the gospel and "believe" it and are attracted to Jesus Christ, but because of their love for this world and their fear of man they do not repent and surrender to Christ as Lord and Saviour. In our own missionary work we have seen hundreds of individuals make this terrible choice.

Matthew 17 Mount of Transfiguration

Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-9)

This probably occurred on Mt. Hermon, Israel's highest mountain. We are told that it was "an high mountain" (Mt. 17:1), and we know that Christ was in the area of Caesarea Philippi at this time (Mt. 16:13).

See Map 09 - *Christ's Later Ministry.*

For photos of the area of Caesarea Philippi and the origin of the Jordan River see the PowerPoint *"Israel's Geography."*

1. This is the fulfillment of Christ's promise in Matthew 16:28. Modernists and unbelievers have tried to use this as an example of an error in the Bible, by claiming that Jesus did not return before the apostles died, but Peter said the promise was fulfilled on the mount (2 Pet. 1:16-18). There Christ was seen in His kingdom glory as He will appear when He returns. Compare Mt. 25:31; Col. 3:4. Peter called the mountain "holy," which means it was set apart unto God at that occasion.

2. Death is not cessation of existence but a journey. Moses died 1,400 years before Christ was born, but he appeared on the mountain and talked with Christ (Mt. 17:3). Death is a journey, either to heaven or to hell.

3. Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus about His death (Luke 9:30-31). Moses represented the law, and Elijah represented the prophets. Both pointed to Christ. The law pointed to Christ's death through the offerings, direct prophecies, and types. The prophets pointed to Christ's death through prophecies such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. The disciples fell asleep, so we don't know how long Jesus, Moses, and Elijah talked (Luke 9:32).

4. Jesus Christ is the exalted Son who is to have preeminence in all things (Mt. 17:4-5). Peter was putting Jesus on the same footing as Moses and Elijah, but God the Father corrected that error. When we read and teach the Bible, Christ must always receive the preeminence.

5. Jesus comforted the fearful disciples (Mt. 17:6-7). This depicts Christ as the Mediator between God and men. He is the compassionate High Priest who reconciles believing sinners to God and cares for them on their earthly journey.

6. The offer of the kingdom to Israel was now past (Mt. 17:10-12). The nation had rejected John the Baptist and would soon crucify the Messiah.

7. Peter later referred to this experience and said that the written Word of God is more sure (2 Pet. 1:16-21). The Scriptures are more sure than seeing glorious visions and hearing the audible voice of God.

Who was John the Baptist (Mt. 17:10-13)?

1. The disciples asked Jesus about the prophecy of Elijah's coming (Mt. 17:10). Compare Mal. 4:5-6. They doubtless asked this because they had just seen Elijah on the mountain (Mt. 17:3).

2. Jesus gave a two-fold reply:

a. Elijah *will* come (Mt. 17:11). The prophecy of Malachi will be fulfilled literally in the future. Perhaps Elijah will be one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11.

b. Elijah *has* come (Mt. 17:12-13). John the Baptist came in the "spirit and power" of Elijah and was rejected (Lk. 1:17).

The importance of fasting and prayer (Mt. 17:14-21)

1. This scene occurred after Jesus came down from the mountain (Mt. 17:14).

2. The disciples had been unable to cast out a demon (Mt. 17:14-16).

3. Jesus rebuked the people's unbelief (Mt. 17:17). Jesus exhorted the father to have faith (Mk. 9:23-24). Unbelief sends people to hell, and unbelief weakens the Christian life and ministry.

4. Jesus instructed the disciples that some kinds of demonic strongholds are overcome only by prayer combined with fasting (Mt. 17:19-21). Fasting is an element of spiritual warfare.

Jesus again tells of His death and resurrection (Mt. 17:22-23)

1. This is the second time that Jesus tells His disciples that He is going to die.

2. This time they do not rebuke Him, but they are very sad.

The miracle of the tax money (Mt. 17:24-27)

1. What type of tax was this?

   a. Many commentators say that this was the temple tribute demanded by the law in Exodus 30:13. We do not believe this is so, because Jesus never questioned the law yet He did question the legitimacy of this tax (Mt. 17:25-26).

   b. We believe this was some sort of other tax required by Israel's Roman overlords. Jesus referred to it as a "custom or tribute" (Mt. 17:25).

2. This situation teaches us that it is right to pay all taxes that are demanded by the government, even those that are not perfectly just. Compare Romans 13:6-7. If Jesus, the God of all Creation and the Head of the Church, put Himself under taxation, then surely we should.

3. Jesus did a miracle to pay the tax (Mt. 17:27).

   a. When we are serving the Lord and fulfilling our obligations as best we can, we can expect God to meet all of our needs and to help us satisfy all our obligations.

   b. He can supply our needs in many ways. Sometimes He supplies by natural means and sometimes, by supernatural.

Matthew 18 Children, the Church

Requirement for entrance into the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 18:1-14)

1. There are lessons here about Christ's kingdom.

Christ corrected the disciples' thinking about the kingdom (Mt. 18:1-4). It is not a kingdom after the fashion of this world. It is a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of godliness and humility. It is a kingdom in which every citizen is God-centered and God-like in character. It is not a kingdom in which men push and shove their way to power and then use their positions to enrich themselves at the expense of the people. Every governor in Christ's kingdom is a humble, godly individual who is in submission to God and who cares for the people.

2. There are lessons here about salvation.

a. Salvation requires humbling oneself as a child (Mt. 18:3-4). It requires acknowledging that one is a sinner against God and humbling oneself before Jesus as one's Lord and Master, surrendering to His authority. The child is humble in the sense that he knows that he is a child and that he is under authority.

b. Salvation is a conversion experience (Mt. 18:3). It is a new birth. It is a life-changing miracle. It is to become something different by God's saving power. It is not changing religions. It is not mere lip service to believing in Christ. It is not merely praying a sinner's prayer.

Question: When were the disciples converted? Were they still not converted at that time?

(1) It isn't perfectly clear when the disciples were converted.

(2) Perhaps they were converted when they were baptized by John (Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24). The Lord did not rebaptize them. He accepted John's baptism of repentance and received those who had that baptism and that repentance.

(3) It is important to understand that the Gospels are transitional. It is the record of the transition from Israel to the church, from the Old Testament of Moses to the New Testament of Christ. The disciples only gradually

understood the things Christ was teaching. Their comprehension of Christ Himself grew throughout their time with Him in His earthly ministry.

(4) They could not understand the things of Christ properly until they received the Spirit (John 14:26). It appears that this happened in John 20:22. Then they were baptized with the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). It is all transitional.

(5) Since Pentecost, the doctrine of conversion has been made clear in Acts and the Epistles. Those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are saved and have eternal life.

c. Salvation is the most important thing in life (Mt. 18:7-9).

In speaking about cutting off one's hand or foot or plucking out one's eye, Christ was making the issue of salvation as grave and serious as possible. He was saying that nothing is worth losing your soul. Whatever it is that might keep you from coming to Christ and being born again must be dealt with. He was not teaching a literal cutting off of one's hand or plucking out of the eye, for that would not stop the sinning. He had already taught that it is the sin of the heart that defiles men (Mt. 15:18-20). Crippled men lie and cheat, and blind men lust after women.

Christ was dealing with the issue of repentance. The rich young ruler did not follow Christ because his riches had too great a hold on him and he wasn't willing to repent of his covetousness (Mk. 10:21-22). He should have cut off his hand and plucked out his eye in the sense of holding eternal life of greater value than his earthly riches. Repentance is not a hand or foot or eye issue; it is a heart issue; but it is as radical as cutting off a hand.

d. Salvation was Christ's objective in coming to earth (Mt. 18:11-14). Compare Luke 19:10. He did not come to be an example for mankind or to be a great teacher or to change society at this present time.

3. There are lessons here about children.

a. Children can be saved (Mt. 18:3).

(1) Parents and churches must be very careful in dealing with children about salvation, but the fact remains that children can be saved. We deal with this in *The Mobile Phone and the Christian Home and Church*, a youth

discipleship course available from Way of Life Literature, www.wayoflife.org.

(2) Children's ministries are very important, and churches need to take such ministries seriously by appointing the most gifted and skilled teachers possible. And there should be continual training so the teachers can improve in their ability to teach children. The Bible and the things of Christ are very interesting, and they should be taught in an interesting way to children at their own level of understanding. A child does not think like an adult (1 Co. 13:11), and Bible teaching for children should be geared for a child's thinking. I remember church being very boring when I was a child. The teachers would just read the lessons supplied by the denomination, and they didn't make it interesting. The teaching wasn't practical. It wasn't applied to the daily lives of the children. It just seemed like a strange old book. When I met the man who led me to Christ and he began to teach me the Bible, I remember being amazed that the Bible was so practical and that it spoke to our daily lives in modern times.

b. Children are loved by Christ (Mt. 18:5-7, 10). It is not His will that any of them perish (Mt. 18:14).

c. We must be very careful in how we deal with children, because God has a special interest in them. He made children, and He loves them.

(1) Not only must we not abuse children, but we must not despise them (Mt. 18:10). Despise means not holding something in esteem, not valuing it. To despise the church is to treat it with contempt by one's carnal actions (1 Co. 11:22). To despise youth is to treat youth as something of little value (1 Tim. 4:12). To despise a master is to hold him in low esteem rather than to honor him (1 Tim. 6:2). To despise government is to be disobedient and rebellious (2 Pet. 2:10). To despise children is to ignore and neglect them, to not value them before God, to not care for them, to not properly train them.

(2) Christ warns against offending a child who believes on Him (Mt. 18:6-7). He is warning of eternal hell. Eternal punishment is the thing that is worse than a violent death. Examples of offending a child in this context would include trying to keep the child from believing in Christ, forbidding the child to attend church, teaching lies to the child (such as evolution or liberal

theology about the Bible), and abusing the child either physically, mentally, or sexually.

d. Children have guardian angels (Mt. 18:10).

(1) This refers to believing children (Mt. 18:6).

(2) Angels are assigned to them.

- The angels report directly to God. Jacob had a dream of angels ascending and descending on a ladder to heaven (Gen. 28:12-13). They are first seen ascending, because they are reporting to God and getting their instructions from God, who is standing at the top of the ladder.

- Angels are God's ministering spirits to the saints (Heb. 1:14). "Angels are busy in this world. For example we all have attendant angels. Peter did (Acts 12:8-10) and so did Paul (Acts 27:23). Angels carried the soul of Lazarus to 'Abraham's bosom' when he died (Luke 16:22)" (John Phillips).

- Christ said that these angels see God's face (Mt. 18:10). Man cannot look on God's face, but it appears that angels can. They have a close relationship with God. The Greek word "prosopon" can mean the appearance or the person in general. It is elsewhere translated "person" (Mt. 22:16), "countenance" (Lk. 9:29), and "presence" (Acts 3:13). But most often it refers to the face itself. Of the 73 times "prosopon" is used in Scripture, it is translated "face" 56 times in the King James Bible.

4. There are lessons here about hell fire (Mt. 18:8-9).

a. It is called everlasting fire (Mt. 18:8). This is a description of the nature of the punishment. It consists of everlasting torment in fire. Compare Revelation 14:11; 20:10.

b. It is called hell fire (Mt. 18:9). The Greek word for *hell* in this passage is "gehenna." It originally referred to the valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem where garbage was burned. *Gehenna* is used for the place of torment where unsaved individuals go at death. It is used 12 times in the New Testament, and it always refers to this place. It is also called *hades*. Christ told of a rich man who died and in hell (hades) he lift up his eyes, being in torments (Lk. 16:23). Gehenna or hades will be emptied at the time of the Great White Throne, and following that judgment the occupants will be cast into the lake of fire (Re. 20:11-15).

Christ's second mention of the Church (Mt. 18:15-20)

1. We believe that the church started during the earthly ministry of Christ and that it was anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Those who were saved at Pentecost were "added unto" the already existing church (Acts 2:41).

2. In this passage, Christ describes church discipline.

a. This has to do with personal offenses of one church member against another.

(1) This is not the way to handle public sins in the church. That is described in 1 Corinthians 5.

(2) This is not the way to handle false teaching and compromise among church leaders. Matthew 18:15 is often misused by those who are pushing for a broad fellowship. They claim that this verse forbids men to expose the error of a Christian leader publicly unless one has first gone to that individual and dealt with him privately, but this is an abuse of the passage.

- Matthew 18 gives instructions for dealing with personal problems between Christians. It does not address how to deal with public teachings and actions by Christian leaders. That matter is addressed in passages such as 2 Timothy 2:16-18. To warn of the error and compromise of men who are ministering publicly is Scriptural. If they are teaching error publicly, they should be exposed publicly.

- The situation in Matthew 18 has to do with two members of one church, not with problems between members of various churches. I can only follow this procedure with members of my own church. Those outside of my own assembly are not under its authority and discipline and cannot, therefore, be dealt with after the manner of Matthew 18:15-17.

b. The first objective of church discipline is not to hurt people but is to win back erring brethren (Mt. 18:15).

c. Following are the steps that should be followed in these cases:

(1) The matter should be discussed privately between the two church members (Mt. 18:15). The objective is to clear up problems and achieve spiritual harmony. The individual who takes the initiative should go not

only to confront the other person but also to listen. Oftentimes the problem lies in misunderstanding and lack of information.

(2) If this doesn't solve the problem, the injured brother should take two or three others (Mt. 18:16).

(3) If that doesn't solve the problem, it should be brought before the church (Mt. 18:17).

(4) If the trespasser refuses to hear the church, he is to be disciplined (Mt. 18:17).

d. What does it mean in verse 17, "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican"?

(1) It doesn't mean never to speak with him or to forbid him to attend church. The unsaved are welcome to do such things.

(2) It means that the church member that is under discipline is not allowed to serve in the church or to participate in church business and ordinances (such as taking the Lord's Supper). The heathen or unsaved are not allowed to do these things.

e. The seriousness of church issues is seen here (Mt. 18:18). Men often take the church and its business lightly, but God doesn't. Compare 1 Co. 3:17; Heb. 10:25 and 13:17.

f. The "binding" does not pertain to a person's eternal destiny but to his earthly life.

g. God's power is available for church discipline (Mt. 18:18-20). Compare 1 Co. 5:3-4. Discipline is difficult, and there are all sorts of potential problems that can arise from its exercise, but if a church is right with God and is following His Word, God will be with it in all disciplinary cases.

3. There is an application of Matthew 18:19-20 to agreeing together in prayer apart from official acts of church discipline. My godly maternal grandmother, who was a prayer warrior, believed in the power of agreeing with others about important prayer requests, and she based it on this passage. Private prayer is powerful (Mt. 6:5-6), but in some matters agreeing with others in prayer is an additional power.

4. Verse 20 does not mean that a proper New Testament church is any two or three believers who congregate together. The apostles gave clear instructions about what

is required for a proper church, and that is proper organization and sound doctrine and the ordination of qualified leadership.

a. See the book of Titus. Paul instructed the preacher Titus about how to "set in order the things that are wanting" (Titus 1:5). The first thing he described was the ordination of qualified elders (Titus 1:5-16).

b. It was the apostolic pattern to go back to newly started congregations and to organize them and ordain elders (Acts 14:21-23).

The importance of forgiveness (Mt. 18:21-35)

1. This is a powerful lesson on forgiveness.

a. God is compassionate, and He wants His children to be compassionate toward one another.

b. Jesus taught Peter that forgiveness is never ending (Mt. 18:21-22). By saying we should forgive 490 times, He is not saying that we should keep a list; He is saying there is no end to the forgiveness we should show to others.

c. The parable of the unforgiving servant is a strong warning for the believer to show mercy to others (Mt. 18:23-35). God takes these matters very seriously.

d. This lesson looks ahead to Christ's kingdom and the rule by the rod of iron. The churches don't have prisons, but we learn spiritual lessons from the kingdom teaching in the Gospels.

2. This reminds us of the greatness of God's mercy toward sinners. If He requires that we forgive one another 490 times, will He not do much more? And God's mercy is like the forgiveness of ten thousand talents. That equals 750 ounces of money and is a massive debt. By comparison, the debts that men owe men are very small. 100 pence was a mere 1/8 ounce or 6,000 times less than 10,000 talents.

a. Yes, "he forgiveth ALL thine iniquities..." (Psa. 103:3).

b. His mercy is as great as the heavens are high above the earth (Psa. 103:11).

c. He has removed our transgressions from us "as far as the east is from the west" (Psa. 103:12).

Matthew 19 Divorce

Christ's teaching on divorce (Mt. 19:1-12)

1. Jesus leaves Galilee for the last time and goes to the coasts of Judea east of the Jordan River (Mt. 19:1). Luke says He set His face to go to Jerusalem (Lk. 9:51).

See Map 06 - *Israel Time of Christ.*

2. The Pharisees were asking Jesus about His interpretation of Deu. 24:1-4. There were two basic interpretations among the Jews in that day that were promoted by two influential rabbis:

a. Shammai interpreted it to mean that divorce could be obtained *only on the basis of immorality*.

b. Hillel interpreted it to mean that a divorce could be obtained for *any type of uncleanness*. Therefore divorce on this basis could be for almost any reason.

3. Jesus took them back to the first marriage in Genesis 2 as the pattern for God's will (Mt. 19:4-6).

4. He explained that divorce was allowed by God only because of the hardness of man's heart and the need to regulate man's sin (Mt. 19:8).

5. Jesus gave a strong doctrine of divorce, in saying that the only cause for divorce is fornication and any other cause is sinful (Mt. 19:9). Christ's teaching does not allow for "no fault" divorce as in America.

a. Fornication "is a general term including all forms of immorality, whether by single or married persons, and whether bisexual or homosexual" (Bruce Lackey). Compare 1 The. 4:3-5.

b. The disciples understood how strong this teaching is, because they replied that if such is the case, a man should not get married (Mt. 19:10).

6. Jesus did not do away with divorce altogether. He could have, but He didn't.

7. Some apply this passage only to the espousal for marriage. Compare Mt. 1:18-19, 24. They teach that there can be no divorce from an actual marriage, only from an espousal prior to the marriage. But the context is normal marriage (Mt. 19:3-7).

Adam and Eve had no espousal . Jesus uses the term "one flesh," which certainly applies only to an actual marriage and not a mere espousal.

8. Did Jesus allow for the remarriage of the divorced person if the divorce is because of fornication? In my estimation, there is room for some disagreement on this matter, because the New Testament is a bit ambiguous. Bruce Lackey, for example, took the position that the "except" clause in Mt. 19:9 allows for *both* divorce and remarriage. He said, "Christ allowed divorce, after marriage, for any form of immorality, and the innocent party is permitted to remarry without being guilty of adultery."

9. The other major New Testament passage on this subject is 1 Co. 7:10-16.

a. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 deals with the case of a believer married to a believer. In this case, Paul referred back to Christ's teaching and reaffirmed it (Mt. 19:10-12). If a partner departs from a marriage, he or she should remain unmarried or be reconciled with his mate. The issue of fornication is not brought up, because it was already dealt with by Christ. Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 11 does not supersede Christ's teaching in Matthew 19.

b. 1 Corinthians 7:12-15 deals with the case of a believer married to an unbeliever.

(1) Paul is not condoning mixed marriages. Compare 2 Co. 6:14.

(2) Paul is addressing marriages wherein one of the partners got saved after the wedding. He teaches that this marriage are legitimate before God. The believer should remain in that marriage and look for God's help and blessing (1 Co. 7:14). The believer's spouse and children are holy in the sense that they are set apart and different from those in other unbelieving families. They hear God's Word; they usually attend church services; they meet Christians. And there is great potential for them to be saved. I think of a polygamist who got saved. He stayed with his pagan wives, and many of his children and grandchildren have been saved.

(3) In the case of abandonment by an unbelieving spouse, the believer "is not under bondage" (1 Co. 7:15). Again there are two common interpretations of this, and there are strong feelings on both sides of the issue: Some think this means the one who is abandoned is free to marry

again. Others think that the one abandoned is free from the obligations of the marriage but not free to remarry.

10. The divorce issue is difficult because of the hardness of man's heart. This is why God allows it. His will from the beginning was that marriage be between one man and one woman until death. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). But we live in a sinful world, and God has graciously made provisions for sin. But the child of God should always aim for God's perfect and best will (Ro. 12:1-2). He should aim for the excellent thing, not the mediocre thing (Phil. 1:10).

11. Jesus seems to conclude the section on divorce by saying that His strong position cannot be received by everyone because of the weakness of human nature. See Mt. 19:11-12. Dr. Lackey made the following observation on this difficult subject:

> "God permits what he does not always prefer. This is a principle throughout Scripture: Acts 13:18; Deu. 14:26; Prov. 20:1; 23:29; Ro. 14:21; Jam. 1:17. The latter passage teaches that God is unchangeable. What He once thought about strong drink, for example, He has always thought; the same is true with marriage, but He has permitted polygamy and divorce even though Genesis teaches that He designed marriage for two people as a permanent institution."

12. A divorced person cannot hold the office of pastor (1 Tim. 3:1) or deacon (1 Tim. 3:12). Every sin can be forgiven, but sins have consequences in this world.

Jesus blesses the children (Mt. 19:13-15)

1. For the second time, the Scripture emphasizes Christ's love for children.

2. Jesus said that children should be allowed to come to Him (Mt. 19:14).

a. Children need to be saved. They are sinners. Compare Psalm 51:5; Prov. 22:15; 23:13-14.

b. Children are saved the same way that adults are saved, by acknowledging their sinful condition, repenting toward God, and exercising faith in Christ as Lord and Savior (Acts 20:21).

c. But we must be very careful in dealing with children, because they are easily manipulated. In the course *The Mobile Phone and the Christian Home and Church* we deal with the subject of leading children to Christ.

The rich ruler (Mt. 19:16-26)

1. Jesus did not say that He is not God, as some claim. In fact, He was inquiring whether the man understood that He is indeed God. Jesus did not deny that He is good, and by not denying that He is good He was claiming to be God. The ruler did not know who Jesus is. He addressed Him as a "Good Master," and that is how multitudes of people think of Jesus.

2. Jesus did not teach here that the way of salvation is by good works.

a. Instead, He was using the law for its intended purpose, which is to reveal man's sinful condition that he might turn to Christ for salvation (Gal. 3:24).

b. Perfection is what the law requires. Compare Mt. 19:21 and Gal. 3:10 and James 2:10. God requires perfect righteousness, and fallen man does not have it. He needs a Saviour.

c. Christ was using the law to show the young man that he was a sinner and to correct his false idea that he had kept the law. In reality, he had broken the very first commandment, in that he had put his riches above God. This was seen in the fact that he refused to obey and follow the Son of God. And he had broken the second great commandment, which is to love my neighbor as myself.

3. Jesus did not force people to be saved, and He loved even those who rejected Him (Mk. 10:21).

4. Why did Jesus say that it is harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved (Mt. 19:23-26)?

a. Christ used the expression about the camel going through the eye of a needle to illustrate the impossibility of a rich man being saved apart from the power of God. The covetousness of the fallen human heart is so great and the enticements of riches so powerful, that it would appear an impossibility for a rich man to give up his love of wealth and his pride of life and his confidence in the flesh to repent and humble himself as a needy sinner and to trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Prov. 18:11).

b. Jesus was teaching that salvation is a divine miracle -- "but with God all things are possible" (Mt. 19:26).

c. We do not believe the camel and the needle referred to any specific situation that actually existed. Rather, it was a proverbial saying which described

something so difficult as to appear impossible. The Indians have a similar saying, "It is like the elephant trying to get through the spout of a kettle."

Christ's reward to His followers (Mt. 19:27-30)

1. The "regeneration" refers to the kingdom that Christ will establish at His return (Mt. 19:28). Compare Acts 3:19-21. The very creation itself will be regenerated, and the desert will blossom as the rose (Isa. 35:1).

2. The apostles are also associated with Israel (Mt. 19:28). The church and Israel are different entities (1 Co. 10:32), but they are closely associated. Compare Ephesians 2:19-22, which says that church-age believers are fellow citizens with Old Testament saints. There is much that we do not know at this time about the relationship of the church and Israel in the future, and we believe that some have erred by going beyond what the Bible says in trying to create systematic theologies.

3. Christ's rewards to those who serve Him in this world will be great (Mt. 19:29).

4. Is "everlasting life" a reward for service (Mt. 19:29)? No, everlasting life is used in different ways in Scripture. It is, first of all, a gift to those who put their faith in Christ (Joh. 3:16). It also describes a future condition that does not currently exist, as here in Mt. 19:29. Compare 1 Tim. 6:17-19. Inheriting everlasting life and laying hold on everlasting life refers to laying up rewards in the next life.

5. What does Mt. 19:30 mean? Christ explains the meaning in Matthew 20:1-16 in the Parable of the Householder. Context is always consulted first for the right interpretation of Scripture.

Matthew 20

See the Powerpoint *"Christ's Ministry on the Sea of Galilee."*

The Parable of the Householder (Mt. 20:1-16)

1. The main teaching of this parable:

God rewards as He sees fit and each of His servants must accept what God gives and not complain about his situation and covet that which another believer has. This is summarized in Mt. 20:15.

2. Other lessons from the parable:

a. God is always righteous in His dealings ("I am good," v. 15). He can be trusted explicitly.

b. It is not my business what God does for another person. Compare John 21:20-23.

c. Rewards are based more on motives and attitude than on length of service. The first laborers agreed to serve all day for a penny, but they turned out to be complainers and discontents. The other groups of laborers agreed to serve for whatever the master thought best. They trusted the master to do right and served with a good heart. This is more important to God than long and hard service.

d. Those who serve for many years will not necessarily be rewarded more than those who serve for a short time. If a person gets saved later in life, for example, he should serve God with all of his strength during the short time he has remaining, knowing that he still has potential for great reward.

Jesus approaches Jerusalem (Mt. 20:17-19)

1. Christ returns to Jerusalem from Galilee for the final time (Mt. 20:17, 29). He probably came down the Jordan Valley to Jericho. From there He journeyed up to Jerusalem. The descent from Jerusalem to Jericho is 1125 meters (3,425 feet). Jerusalem is 855 meters (2,600 feet) above sea level, while Jericho is 270 meters (825 feet) below sea level. The distance is only 24 kilometers or 15 miles, but it is over rugged terrain and requires a good part of a day to walk.

See Map 03 - *Israel in Jesus' Time and Earlier.*

For a study of this region, including photos and video clips, see the PowerPoint *"From Jerusalem to Jericho."*

2. Jesus again tells His disciples that He is going to die and be resurrected (Mt. 20:18-19).

a. Jesus knows the future, proving that He is God.

b. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, He would have been a liar or a deceived man rather than a "great teacher." If Christ is not the Son of God and if He did not rise from the dead, He was not a great man.

c. God has told us in His Word what the future holds. Bible prophecy should form a major part of the believer's worldview.

The chief shall be servant (Mt. 20:20-28)

1. Jesus was worshipped (Mt. 20:20). His acceptance of worship proves that He was God. See Ex. 34:14; Re. 19:10.

2. The question was asked by the mother of James and John. Compare Mt. 4:21. This reminds us that all believers begin as spiritual babies and grow in grace and knowledge, and that was true for the apostles.

3. Jesus replied that greatness in the kingdom of God is different than greatness in this present world. Those who are great in the kingdom of God are those who are humble servants of the Lord and who do not seek greatness for themselves. See Mark 9:35 -- "if a man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." This problem of desiring greatness continued to exert itself in churches and resulted in the rise of bishops and popes who exalted themselves over all the churches.

4. In verse 28, Jesus was not saying that He would die only for some.

a. In other passages, we see that He died for the sins of the world or to make it possible for all men to be saved. See 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; 1 Joh. 2:2.

b. 1 Timothy 4:10 explains the apparent contradiction. Jesus made it possible for all men to be saved, but only those who believe are truly saved. He is the potential Saviour of all but the special Saviour of those who believe.

The healing of the blind men (Mt. 20:29-34)

1. They were persistent in crying out to Jesus, even though the crowd tried to discourage them. This is an example that men should not allow anything to hinder them from coming to and serving the Lord.

2. They asked for mercy. They were thus acknowledging their sin before God, which is necessary for salvation. If a person thinks he is righteous, he cannot be saved.

3. They acknowledged Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Lord, the Son of David. No one can be saved who does not acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

4. They were healed completely. Jesus never failed to heal when He attempted to do so (Mt. 20:34).

5. Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 18:35-43 mention only one blind man, Bartimaeus.

> It is probable that one blind man, Bartimaeus, was healed in one part of Jericho and two more were healed in another part. Luke 18:35 occurred as Jesus "was come nigh unto Jericho." This would be on the east side toward the Jordan Valley. Matthew 20:29-30 occurred as Jesus was departing Jericho. This would be on the west side toward Jerusalem. "If our Lord remained at Jericho the night with Zacchaeus, as some suppose, the curing of the blind man as the Lord entered the city would soon have become known, and others would naturally have been at the gate on the following morning. There may have been three cured, or even more" (*Bible Handbook*).

Matthew 21 Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

For maps, photos, and video clips see the PowerPoint *"Christ's Passion Week."*

See also the illustrations *"Herod's Temple," "Herod's Temple Looking East," "Herod's Temple Looking North," "Herod's Temple Looking West."*

Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mt. 21:1-11)

1. This was a fulfillment of prophecy. Compare Zec. 9:9. Notice that Zechariah 9:10 is not quoted. Verse 9 refers to the first coming of Christ, whereas verse 10 refers to His second coming.

2. By comparing all of the Gospels, we can see what transpired. Luke (19:30-35) and John (12:14-15) mention only the colt, the young ass, telling us that Jesus rode on the colt. Matthew gives the fuller account and mentions both animals. It appears that both the mother ass and its colt were brought and clothes were laid over both, as Matthew describes, but Christ rode only on the colt. It would appear that the mother ass accompanied her colt as the entourage entered the city.

3. This entrance into Jerusalem exhibited the Lord Jesus Christ both as the King of Israel and as the Saviour. In contrast to this event, His return to earth will be in power and glory. He will be mounted upon a magnificent white horse and accompanied by the hosts of heaven (Re. 19:11-16).

4. The words that the Jews cried out were from Psalm 118:25-26. "Hosanna" means "save now." Some of the people in the crowd were receiving Jesus as the Messiah, but most were receiving Him only as a prophet. See Mt. 21:9-11.

5. This event was a witness to the Jewish nation (Mt. 21:9). They should have known that Jesus was the Messiah, because He fulfilled every prophecy and gave every evidence; but they were fickle, fearing man instead of God, following their unbelieving leaders and their own tradition instead of the infallible Scripture.

Casting out the moneychangers (Mt. 21:12-13)

1. Jesus also did this at the beginning of His ministry. Compare Joh. 2:14-17.

2. What error was Jesus correcting? It was not wrong to sell things by or in the Temple. Compare Deu. 14:24-26. In Matthew 21:12, we see plainly that Jesus was condemning thievery. The moneychangers and sellers were robbing the people by charging large exchange fees and outrageous prices. The price of a dove was supposed to be affordable for low income people, but the sellers had increased the price. The high priest and his family got a share of the ill-gotten profits. The money changers and animal sellers probably congregated under Solomon's Porch, which was the colonnaded porch running along the eastern, western and northern sides of the Temple. It surrounded the Court of the Gentiles, and the covetousness of the Jerusalem Jews had given the Lord's Temple a bad name among the Gentiles.

3. We should have this great zeal for the house of God today, which is the church (1 Tim. 3:15). Jesus was not afraid to make trouble for the sake of cleaning up God's house. Paul showed this zeal in all of his epistles, such as in the epistles to Corinth, in which he corrected sins and errors.

Jesus continues to heal (Mt. 21:14-17)

1. Jesus had compassion on the people to the very end (Mt. 21:14). He was also continuing to prove that He was the Messiah.

2. The Pharisees were willfully blind to the very end (Mt. 21:15-16).

3. Jesus answered them from the Word of God (Mt. 21:16; Psalm 8:2).

4. Jesus spent the night in Bethany (Mt. 21:17).

   a. Bethany was only about two miles from Jerusalem to the east of the Mount of Olives.

   b. It was the village of Mary and Martha and Lazarus (Joh. 11:1).

Cursing the fig tree (Mt. 21:18-22)

For photos of this and further description see the PowerPoint *"Christ's Passion Week."*

Lessons

1. Jesus has power to bless as well as to curse. He is the Saviour and He is also the judge.

2. This is a parable of the Jewish nation. It should have borne good fruit and received God's blessing but would be cursed and scattered to the ends of the earth.

3. This is a lesson about believers.

a. True believers bring forth fruit just as healthy fig trees bring forth fruit. Those who do not bring forth fruit are not true believers. Compare Joh. 15:2, 6.

b. False Christians can appear outwardly true for a time. The fig tree had leaves and appeared to be sound, but it was actually barren.

4. Jesus used the occasion of cursing the fig tree to teach about the power of faith and prayer (Mt. 21:21-22).

a. This is not a promise that I can have whatever I pray for. This passage must be compared with other passages about prayer, and when we do this we are reminded that prayer must always be in accordance with God's will and Word. See 1 John 5:14-15.

b. Jesus was teaching that faith is a great thing and that we must have faith in God when we pray, but He is not saying that if I have faith I can have anything that I conceive. Faith must be based on God's Word (Ro. 10:17). It doesn't come from my own thinking and desires. A similar promise is in Phil. 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." This doesn't mean I can do any thing that I can conceive, such as fly without an airplane; it means I can do all things in the will of God.

Parable of the two sons (Mt. 21:23-32)

1. This parable was addressed to the Pharisees, because they had refused to receive Him.

2. Jesus demonstrated their wickedness and hypocrisy by His question about John's authority and also by means of the parable.

a. His question about John pointed out that they had no excuse, because John had testified of Him and the people had believed John.

b. In the parable (Mt. 21:28-32), Jesus taught that they had no excuse because many others had believed in Him, even those who did not know the Scriptures as well as the Pharisees.

(1) The first son was like the harlots and sinners. He didn't care anything about God's will at first and had no care for religion, but afterward he obeyed.

(2) The other son was like the Pharisees. He had all of the right words and professions and appearance of true religion, but actually he refused to obey God's Word.

3. Other lessons from the parable

a. God accepts men when they obey and not merely when they profess. We are not saved by works, but the works are the evidence that we are saved (Eph. 2:8-10; 2 Tim. 2:19). Some "talk a good talk" but they don't "walk a good walk."

b. God does not want mere good intentions and good words from believers; He wants us to actually go and labor in His harvest.

Parable of the vineyard (Mt. 21:33-46)

1. This parable describes the rebellion and judgment of the Jewish nation and warns that it will be judged. The *householder* is God; the *vineyard* is the Jewish nation; and the *husbandmen* are the Jewish leaders. The *servants* that were sent are the prophets. The *son* is Jesus Christ, who was rejected and crucified.

2. Jesus warns the Jewish leaders of the prophecies in Psalm 118:22-23 and Isaiah 8:14-15. Christ is the stone that the builders rejected but which becomes the head of the corner. "Christ as the 'Stone' is revealed in a threefold way: (1) To Israel Christ, coming not as a splendid monarch but in the form of a servant, is a stumbling stone and rock of offence (Isa. 8:14-15; Ro. 9:32-33; 1 Co. 1:23; 1 Pet. 2:8). (2) To the church, Christ is the foundation stone and the head of the corner (1 Co. 3:11; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-5). (3) To the Gentile world-powers (see 'Gentiles,' Lu 21:24; Re 16:19) He is to be the smiting-stone of destruction (Dan. 2:34). Israel stumbled over Christ; the church is built upon Christ; Gentile world- dominion will be broken by Christ" (Scofield).

3. Mt. 21:43 is used by those who teach that God is through with the Jewish nation and that the church has replaced Israel.

a. This contradicts the plain teaching of many Scriptures:

(1) It contradicts the promises of God to Israel (i.e., Jer. 33:19-22).

(2) It also contradicts the plain teaching of the New Testament (i.e., Ro. 11:25-26, 29).

b. Jesus did not say the kingdom of God would be taken from Israel but *from the people He was addressing*. He was addressing "the chief priests and elders of the people" (Mt. 21:23). Verse 45 makes this plain. "And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them." Thus this passage teaches that the Jewish religious rulers of Jesus' day lost their position in the kingdom of God because of their rejection of Christ. The kingdom of God would be taken from them and given to others.

c. The parable itself teaches that Israel and her promises shall remain intact in a future restoration. In the parable of Mt. 21:33-44, the vineyard is Israel and the husbandmen signify Israel's spiritual rulers. It is the husbandmen who are destroyed and replaced, not the vineyard.

4. Many of the Jewish people *believed* in Jesus, but they believed that He was a mere prophet rather than the Messiah (Mt. 21:46). Likewise, many today believe in a false christ rather than the true Christ of the Scriptures (2 Co. 11:4).

Matthew 22 Christ and the Sadducees and Pharisees

The Parable of the Wedding Feast (Mt. 22:1-14)

1. This parable describes the course of the church age. It teaches that God would reject the Jews and call the Gentiles.

a. Those first called to the marriage were the Jews. They rejected the call and put it off.

b. The king then destroyed that city, which points to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

c. Then the king commanded his servants to go "into the highways" and call everyone to the marriage, pointing to the preaching of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

2. The man without the wedding garment signifies those who think they can come to God in their own righteousness or by their own religions (Mt. 22:11-13). In Jewish custom, those who were invited to a wedding were provided with special wedding garments that they wore. This depicts salvation, being forgiven of sins and clothed in the righteousness of Christ. It is a gift that God provides to the believer.

3. The statement "many are called but few are chosen" in Mt. 22:14 means many are called to salvation, but God receives only those who come on His terms through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

4. Other lessons from the parable

a. A sinner can reject the gospel. It is not "irresistible," as Calvinism teaches (Mt. 21:3). Compare Mt. 23:37.

b. Most sinners treat the gospel lightly (Mt. 22:5). They foolishly ignore eternal things and give their full attention to the temporal things of this world.

c. Family and business are important, but nothing must come between a person and God. God and His business must be first (Mt. 6:33).

d. Those who hate God also hate God's servants (Mt. 22:6).

e. Salvation is for all men, for "whosoever will" (Mt. 22:9-10).

f. All men are sinners, but in the eyes of men, some are good and some bad (Mt. 22:10). For example, Cornelius was a religious man before his conversion (Acts 10:1-2), whereas the woman who washed Jesus' feet in Luke 7 had been a harlot. Both were needy sinners in God's eyes.

g. Sinners are already called but someone must go out and invite them to salvation (Ro. 10:14). That is the job of every believer (Mk. 16:15).

h. God is not only a God of love but also a God of wrath and judgment to those who reject Him.

Attempts by the Jewish leaders to trick Jesus (Mt. 22:15-46)

The Jewish leaders were united only in their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. In their questions, they tried to turn the hearts of the people against Him.

1. **The Herodians** (Mt. 22:16-22)

a. Who were the Herodians?

They were aligned with King Herod and his family and thus obtained their name from him. They were a Jewish political party that loved Rome and wanted the Jews to be like Romans. They built Roman theaters and gymnasiums and held Olympic-like games. A modern-day parallel would be worldly religious leaders, such as liberation theologians, who think more about socio-political activity than about the spiritual things of the Word of God.

b. What was the purpose of their question?

The Jewish leaders wanted to get rid of Jesus, but they did not have the power to put people to death. Thus, to get rid of Him they had to do one of two things: (1) They had to turn the civil government against him, because the Roman government had the power to exercise capital punishment. To do this, they had to prove that Jesus was causing anarchy against the government. (2) Or they had to stir up the people against him so that they would stone Him. The question was thus contrived to bring Jesus into disrepute with one or the other of these parties regardless of how He replied. If He replied that it was lawful to give taxes to Caesar, the Jewish crowds would turn against Him, because they despised Caesar's yoke and thought of themselves as a free people. If He replied that it was unlawful to give taxes, the Roman government would see Him as a rebel and would have cause to put Him to death.

c. The wisdom of Jesus' reply

(1) Jesus did not give either of the replies that the Herodians expected. Instead, He reminded them that they were responsible to submit to Caesar in the things over which He had authority but that it is God who has authority over all things. Caesar's image was stamped on the tribute money, but God's image is stamped on man himself. Neither the Romans nor the Jews could disagree with this reply. Thus, "they marvelled."

(2) Jesus taught that believers have a responsibility to obey and support the government, thus laying the groundwork for the position of the churches during this age. Compare Romans 13:1-7.

2. **The Sadducees** (Mt. 22:23-33)

a. Who were the Sadducees?

The Sadducees were Jewish priests who denied the supernatural and miraculous (Acts 23:8). A modern-day parallel would be the theological modernists who question or deny the supernatural elements of the Bible and Christianity, such as Christ's virgin birth and bodily resurrection.

b. Lessons from their question and Christ's answer

(1) Their question only revealed their own ignorance and unbelief. This is usually true for the challenges of modernists and skeptics today. They don't know the Bible and they don't know the power of God. For example, their denial of creation and Christ's resurrection is based on ignorance of an Almighty God.

(2) Believers do not marry in heaven. This shows the error of Mormonism's eternal marriage doctrine.

(3) Death is not to sleep in the grave but is to be alive to God (Mt. 22:31-32).

(4) Jesus always taught men to believe every word of the Scriptures.

3. **The Pharisees** (Mt. 22:34-40)

a. Who were the Pharisees?

The Pharisees were orthodox Jewish leaders who considered themselves to be the keepers of God's law and professed to be zealous for God and the Scriptures, but in reality they gave more reverence to the traditions of the rabbis than to the

Scriptures. They were also hypocrites who did not live what they preached. A modern-day parallel would be Roman Catholic priests who have added Catholic tradition to the Bible and leaders of cults, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons.

b. Their question to Jesus (Mt. 22:35-40)

(1) This is another attempt to cause Jesus to be reduced in the eyes of the people. The answer to the question was hotly debated in that day. Some said circumcision was the greatest, others, the sabbath, the sacrifices, etc. Thus, if Jesus answered with one thing, He would antagonize those people who had taken another position.

(2) Jesus' answer shows that every man is condemned by the law, which is its purpose (Ro. 3:19). Jesus' answer brought conviction to every man, because no man keeps the law truly. No man loves God with all his being nor his neighbor as himself. Thus every man's mouth was stopped!

4. Misc. Lessons

a. False religious leaders are liars, and we must be very careful in our dealings with them so as not to be deceived. They pretended to be Jesus' friend, but they were His most bitter enemies.

b. False religious leaders are flatterers and they deceive by this means (Mt. 22:16).

c. There are different kinds of questions. Some ask questions sincerely, wanting to know the answer. Others ask questions insincerely, wanting to trap and confuse. These are the "foolish questions" mentioned in 2 Tim. 2:23.

d. Lessons about Jesus

(1) Jesus did not fear any man and He was wiser than all men.

(2) Jesus knows the hearts of all men and is not deceived by our attempts to put on a false front.

(3) Jesus was plain spoken in His preaching and dealings with men. He called these men hypocrites to their faces (Mt. 22:18).

(4) He did not ignore the teachings and challenges of false teachers, but He answered them plainly and fully. This was for the sake of His own flock and

to be an example to His apostles. It is not enough to preach the truth. Christian leaders must also refute error.

5. Jesus' question to them (Mt. 22:41-46)

a. He confronted them with the mystery of the person of the Messiah. On one hand, the Messiah is David's son (a man). On the other hand, he is David's Lord (God) (Psalm 110:1)! The Pharisees couldn't answer this mystery because their minds were blinded by unbelief, but the answer is that the Messiah is both man and God in one Person.

b. Jesus confirmed the divine inspiration and traditional authorship of the Psalms (Mt. 22:44).

c. Jesus will always have the last word (Mt. 22:46)!

Matthew 23 Christ's Sermon against the Pharisees

Jesus' warning to the people (Mt. 23:1-12)

1. He instructed the people to keep God's law even though the religious leaders were wicked (Mt. 23:2-3).

   a. Jesus was not telling the people to obey the false traditions, because He himself did not obey them (Mt. 15:1-9).

   b. He was telling them to obey the Scriptures in spite of their leaders -- "they sit in Moses' seat" (Mt. 23:2)

   c. People have no excuse for not obeying the Lord. They can follow the Lord even when their religious leaders are not strong. They should be like the Bereans and test their leaders with God's Word and obey God rather than man (Acts 17:11).

2. He warned about the hypocrisy and sin of these leaders (Mt. 23:6-12).

   a. Christ warned about their hypocrisy and pride (Mt. 23:5-6). The phylactery is a little box containing tiny scrolls of Scripture and worn on the hand and forehead. It is based on Deuteronomy 6:6, 8. Traditionally the phylactery contains the following Scripture portions: Exodus 13:1-10; 11:16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21. First and foremost God wants His Word in man's heart, but in Jesus' day the Pharisees had removed God's Word from their hearts and had replaced it with human tradition. The phylacteries were worn for show as an emblem of self-righteous religion.

   b. Christ warned about titles such as "Rabbi," which means master. It is a title of religious prestige. Christians should not take such titles for themselves. Examples are "reverend," "his holiness," etc. The exalting of offices and positions occurred in early church history and produced the Catholic Church. The word "bishop" in Scripture is the same humble office in the assembly as pastor and elder, but the Catholic Church exalted the office of bishop to a position of ruling over a territory. They created other positions and titles, such as metropolitan, archbishop, cardinal, and pope.

   c. Christ warned about calling men "father" (Mt. 23:9) as a religious title. Catholic priests still disobey this commandment today.

d. Christ warned that those who exalt themselves will be abased by God.

Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees (Mt. 23:13-33)

1. Jesus was very brave, bold, and plain spoken in His preaching. This is perhaps the strongest sermon that was ever preached by any man. It was preached in public in front of the pharisees themselves and in the audience of the people. Christ knew that the Pharisees already wanted to kill him and that His reproof would enrage them even more. He called them hypocrites (vv. 13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29), blind guides (vv. 16, 24), fools and blind (vv. 17, 19), blind Pharisee (v. 26), serpents (v. 33), generation of vipers (v. 33). By calling the Pharisees "blind guides," Christ was mocking their pretense to be guides of the blind (Ro. 2:19).

2. Preaching the truth is not contrary to love. Jesus Christ is love incarnate.

3. What was the sin of the Pharisees? Christ rebuked them for the following errors:

Note that the sin of the Pharisees was not zeal to obey God's Word. They had no such zeal. Their zeal was to obey their own tradition.

a. Christ warned of their pride (Mt. 23:5-12).

(1) Pride and self-exaltation is the exact opposite of the proper attitude of a true man of God. Christ teaches us to abase ourselves (v. 12).

(2) We must beware of special titles, special clothing, etc., that tends to exalt man rather than God. For information on the phylacteries, see the PowerPoint *"Bible Culture - Phylactery."*

b. Christ warned of their false gospel (Mt. 23:13).

(1) They shut up the kingdom of heaven by making salvation a matter of keeping the law instead of using the law to point to Christ and grace and faith (Ro. 9:31 - 10:4; Gal. 3:24).

(2) They did everything they could to keep people from believing the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 9:24; 13:45, 50; 14:2, 19; 17:5, 13; 18:12; 20:3; 21:27; 23:12; 1 Th. 2:14-16).

c. Christ warned of their greed and covetousness (Mt. 23:14).

The Jewish leaders should have cared for the widows and weak and needy as God's law commanded (Ex. 22:22; De. 24:17, 19-21; 27:19), but instead they took advantage of them and robbed them.

The Jewish leaders used many devices to rob widows of their inheritances. They promised to pray long prayers for them. The Jewish leaders tricked the grieving widows into putting their inheritances into the hands of lawyers, promising that they would care for them, but instead they invented ways to steal the inheritance, such as by charging extremely high fees.

The Catholic Church invented many devices to rob people of their money. For example, they sold indulgences and accepted money to perform masses for the dead. Many Protestant and Baptist pastors have also been covetousness and thieves.

"[T]he goods in the houses of such as were left with fatherless children, and but little to support them; who being left alone, and none to advise them, and being weak, and prone to superstition; these greedy dogs, as Isaiah calls them, who could never have enough, easily imposed upon them, wormed them out of all their substance, stripped them bare of the necessaries of life, prevailed on them to sell their houses and goods, and bestow them on them; or got their little estates into their hands, pretending to take care, and dispose of them for them, to their advantage" (John Gill).

d. Christ warned of their false zeal (Mt. 23:15).

They had great religious zeal and would go to the ends of the earth and make great personal sacrifices to make converts, but their religious zeal was misdirected because it was devoted to error instead of to truth.

(1) Zeal in a false cause, no matter how sincere, is not acceptable to God. Compare 1 Co. 13:3; 2 Tim. 2:5.

(2) Thus we see that the missionary zeal of false groups such as the Catholic Church and the cults is of no value before God. Church histories that treat Roman Catholic missionaries as true men of God are misguided and dangerous.

e. Christ warned of their false swearing (Mt. 23:16-22).

(1) They had many devices they could use not to honor an oath, such as saying the oath was not made in the right way. "The Pharisees graded oaths

according to such foolish and artificial distinctions. If a man swore by an object that was not graded as sacred, he was not considered guilty of oath-breaking if he failed to keep his pledge" (John Phillips).

(2) Christ elsewhere taught against using oaths; instead, "let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Mat 5:33-37).

(3) Christ shows that all oaths are binding before God (Mt. 23:20-22).

f. Christ warned of their unbalanced message (Mt. 23:23-24).

They focused on less important things and neglected the more important (Mt. 23:23-24). We see two lessons from this:

(1) Not everything in the Word of God is of *equal* importance. For example, the Bible's teaching on salvation is more important than its teaching on hair in 1 Corinthians 11.

(2) But everything has *some* importance. Paul taught Timothy to respect every commandment of God's Word (1 Tim. 6:14). The context of 1 Timothy is practical church doctrine, which is typically despised by ecumenical types. Paul praised Corinth for keeping all of the ordinances (1 Co. 11:2). This included Paul's teaching on hair. These less weighty doctrines are not to be ignored and despised as the contemporary crowd treats them, but they are to be given their proper place in the Christian life and ministry.

In the context, straining at gnats and swallowing camels refers to focusing one's attention on small things while ignoring much bigger things. It is a sin that is committed widely by those who reject the truth. For example, it is committed by evolutionists. While ignoring the vast evidence for a Creator, they focus on gnats such as "natural selection," which cannot possibly explain life as it exists.

g. Christ warned of their hypocrisy (Mt. 23:25-28). Their religion was all for show before man. There was no conversion, no inward change. Pharisaism was all about the externals, the religious ritual. The same is true for most false religions.

h. Christ warned that they were the children of those who persecuted the prophets of old (Mt. 23:29-32). Their boast that they were different from those who killed the prophets was proven to be a lie, because they were in the process of doing the same thing to Jesus.

3. Jesus warned them of hell (Mt. 23:33). He preached frequently on hell in order to warn men to be saved. Compare Mt. 5:29, 30; 10:28; 11:23; 18:9; 23:15.

Jesus warns Jerusalem (Mt. 23:34-39)

1. Jesus pronounced judgment upon that generation of Jews (Mt. 23:34-36).

   a. He prophesied that they would persecute Christ's messengers (v. 34). We see the fulfillment of this in the book of Acts (9:24; 13:45, 50; 14:2, 19; 17:5, 13; 18:12; 20:3; 21:27; 23:12).

   b. Note that Abel was the first prophet. His brother, Cain, killed him for his preaching. He is called "righteous" because he believed in God's salvation through an innocent sacrifice (Heb. 11:4). As a prophet he understand God's salvation through Christ.

2. Jesus destroyed the Calvinist idea of the sovereignty of God (Mt. 23:37). God is indeed sovereign but not as defined by Calvinism. Jesus plainly stated that He would have saved them but THEY would not. Jesus even wept over them (Lk. 19:41).

   a. We know that God is sovereign in the sense that He works all things after His own will (Eph. 1:11).

   b. We also know that God has made man in His own image, and that man can say no to God.

3. Jesus prophesies about Israel's "house" (Mt. 23:38-39). This house is the house and kingdom promised to David (2 Sam. 7:16).

   a. It will be left desolate (Mt. 23:38).

   b. But it will not be desolate forever (Mt. 23:39). Israel's house will be rejected until they repent and receive Him at His second coming. Israel is not permanently rejected, only temporarily. Compare Hosea 5:15.

Matthew 24 Prophecy of the Second Coming

Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives; therefore, this is called the "Olivet discourse" (Mt. 24:3). From there He was looking west across the Kidron Valley to Herod's Temple. In this amazing prophecy He describes the events that will occur in the world just prior to His return.

See the following graphics that are in the map section of this course: *"Herod's Temple," "Herod's Temple Looking West."*

1. Christ prophesies the destruction of Herod's Temple (Mt. 24:2). This was fulfilled in AD 70 when the Roman legions under the leadership of Titus destroyed the temple and throw some of the great stones of the buildings onto the pavement below the west side of the Temple Mount. These were gradually covered with dirt and were re-discovered after Israel captured the Temple Mount in 1967 at the end of the Six Day War.

2. The length of and division of Matthew 24

   a. The prophecy is divided into two major parts. First, there is the beginning of sorrows (Mt. 24:4:14). Then there is the great tribulation (Mt. 24:15-28). The last part is worse than the first.

   b. These events occur in the final "week" or seven years of Daniel's prophecy of the 70 Weeks (Dan. 9:24-27).

      (1) For the following reason we know that Daniel's 70 weeks are weeks of years (490 years). The first 69 weeks refer to the period from the time Jerusalem was rebuilt to the crucifixion of Christ, which clearly means that they are weeks of years (Dan. 9:25-26). From the time that Jerusalem was rebuilt until the coming of the Messiah was 483 years (69 X 7). Christ was cut off but not for himself, meaning that He was crucified and died in the place of sinners.

      (2) The final week, or seven years, remains to be fulfilled (Dan. 9:27). Between the 69th and 70th week is the undetermined period of time of the church age. It is like a valley that the Old Testament prophets did not see between the mountain peaks of the first and second coming of Christ. Paul describes the church age as the time of Israel's blindness (Romans 11:25-27).

(3) The final week of Daniel's prophecy is divided into two parts, and in the middle of this seven-year week the Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel and exalt himself as God. At the beginning of the seven years, the Antichrist will make a false peace covenant with Israel. It is probably at this time that the Jewish temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem. Mid-way through the seven years, the Antichrist will break this covenant and exalt himself as God. Compare 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. This event marks the beginning of the 3.5 years of the Great Tribulation. Jesus calls this event "the abomination of desolation" (Mt. 24:15).

c. The prophecies of Revelation affirm the division of the Tribulation into two 3.5 year periods.

(1) The first 3.5 years is described in Revelation 11:3. The two witnesses of Revelation 11 will preach for 1,260 days, or three and a half years. During this period, the Antichrist will come to power through a deceptive "peace program," and the world will rejoice, thinking that the longed-for time of world peace and universal prosperity has finally arrived. The Third Temple will be built; we see it being measured in Revelation 11:1-2. The Antichrist and his peace program will make this possible.

(2) The second 3.5 years is described in Revelation 13:5. The Antichrist will rule for 42 months. See also Revelation 12:6, which says that Israel shall flee into the wilderness for 1,260 days, or three and one-half years. When the Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel at the mid-point of the seven years and proclaims himself God, desecrating the Temple, he will issue a terrible persecution against the Jews.

3. The events of the tribulation

(In previous editions of this course, the following events were organized differently.)

a. There will be great spiritual deception (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24).

(1) Spiritual deception is the first thing that Jesus warned about when He described the end of the age and the Tribulation. Though the events of Matthew 24 will not be fulfilled until the seven final years preceding Christ's return, the Bible warns that the end of the church age will be characterized by the same spiritual deception that will occur during the Tribulation itself.

The entire age is characterized as a progression of error and deception (2 Tim. 3:13).

(2) Christ said that each individual is responsible to avoid deception ("let no man deceive you," Mt. 24:3). Protection comes by knowing the Scripture well and by testing everything by the Scripture (Acts 17:11; 1 Th. 5:21). We know the truth by continuing in God's Word (John 8:31-32) and by obedience (John 7:17).

(3) Churches must give many warnings about false teachers. This is the example that we find in the New Testament. Practically every epistle contains such warnings (e.g., Ro. 16:17; 1 Co. 15:12; 2 Co. 11:1-4; Gal. 1:1-8; Eph. 4:14; Phil. 3:17-18; Col. 2:8; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 4:3-4; Titus 3:9-11; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 4:1; Jude 3). Yet Bible-believing churches in general are giving fewer and fewer clear warnings of error.

(4) Jesus warned of false christs (Mt. 24:5, 23).

- There were already false christs during the early days of the churches (2 Co. 11:4), and Jesus warned that they would increase as the time of His return draws nearer, with an explosion of false christs at the end of the age and into the Tribulation era.

- Following are a few false christs today: There is the **Hindu New Age christ**. *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, for example, claims that Jesus learned wisdom from gurus in India. There is **the Islamic christ** named Isa, who is not the Son of God, did not die for man's sins, and did not rise from the dead. There is **the Roman Catholic christ who is a wafer** of consecrated bread and a helpless babe in Mary's arms. According to Catholicism, you can worship Christ in the form of the host in a little tabernacle in a Catholic church. There is **the Mormon christ** who is the spirit brother of Satan. There is the **Jehovah's Witness christ** who is Michael the Archangel. There is **the natural christ of theological modernism** who was not born of a virgin. The influential theologian Nels Ferre, for example, said Jesus' father was a German soldier. There is **the liberation theology christ** who is a communist freedom fighter and a social justice hero. There is ***The Shack* christ** who is a non-judgmental buddy who doesn't require repentance and doesn't put any "obligations" on people. There is **the rock & roll party christ** of the Christian rock crowd. There is the **ecology christ** who is out to save the

environment and stop global warming. There is **the universalistic christ** whose love is "unconditional" and therefore will be effective for the salvation of all (e.g., Rob Bell's *Love Wins*). There is **the contemplative christ** who is "experienced" by such practices as centering prayer, imagination prayer, and repetition prayer.

(5) Jesus also warned of false miracles that will bring deception (Mt. 24:24).

- When the Bible speaks of miracles at the end of the church age, it is always a warning about deceiving miracles. See also 2 Thessalonians 2:9 and Revelation 13:14. Just because miracles accompany preaching does not mean that the preaching is sound. The teaching must be tested by God's Word.

- A false miracle might be an actual miracle performed by the devil's power, or it might be a trick, but the goal is to deceive. The devil's people did miracles in the time of Moses (Ex. 7:11-12, 22; 8:7, 18).

- Observe that spiritual deception will be so strong that even the elect will be deceived if that were possible (Mt. 24:24). Paul feared that the devil would deceive the church of Corinth (2 Co. 11:1-4).

b. There will be wars, pestilence, famine, and earthquakes (Mt. 24:6-8). These things characterize the end of the church age and will grow in intensity as the time of the return of Christ draws nearer.

We believe that this prophecy has a two-fold application or double perspective. It describes the general course of the church age, particularly the last part of it, but there will be a dramatic increase in these things during the first half of the Tribulation.

Wars: 180 million people died in wars and atrocities in the 20th century, but this is mere child's play compared the wars of the Tribulation era.

Famine: Between six and eight million people starved to death in the Ukraine under Stalin's regime. 30 million died of starvation in China under Mao's regime. The starving people turned to cannibalism and eating their own children. The World Health Organization estimates that four million people starve to death each year even under "normal" circumstances in these end times. This will increase when the Tribulation begins.

Pestilence: This includes disease and plagues. The AIDS epidemic has killed 24 million people and decimated some parts of Africa, where there are 14 million AIDS orphans. Three million people die of malaria each year. The influenza virus and pneumonia kill 56,000 Americans per year. Bacterial infections in hospitals kill hundreds of thousands annually and deaths are on a sharp rise due to new strains of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Pestilence also includes biological and chemical warfare. The Germans used it in WWI; the Japanese used it against the Chinese in WWII; Iraq used it against Iran. The 2001 book *Living Weapons* called biological weapons "the poor man's hydrogen bomb." In Matthew 24 we see that pestilence will increase during the Tribulation.

Earthquakes: A million people have died in earthquakes just in the last 50 years and more die annually. This phenomenon will also increase during the Tribulation.

c. There will be persecution against Jewish evangelists and believers (Mt. 24:9-10, 14).

(1) Jewish evangelists will announce the approaching kingdom and will be persecuted by the Antichrist. This is described in Revelation 7. In verses 1-8 we see 144,000 Jews chosen by God and anointed for this work. In verse 9 we see the great harvest of souls that will come from their preaching. In verse 14 we see the great persecution that they will endure.

(2) The gospel of the kingdom is the same message that Jesus preached when He came to Israel the first time (Mt. 4:17), and it is the message that He sent His disciples to preach during His earthly ministry (Mt. 10:5-7), but it was rejected by the Jewish nation. It is the announcement of the King and His coming kingdom. It is the message that the kingdom of God is about to be established on earth.

d. The Antichrist will reign as god (Mt. 24:15).

(1) This refers to when the Antichrist will set himself up in the Third Temple as God. Compare Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:4. The temple will be built in the beginning of his reign, and during the building the two prophets will prophesy (Re. 11:1-3).

(2) The Jews are warned to flee to the mountains when they see this occur (Mt. 24:16-21), for this event marks the beginning of the last half of Daniel's Seventieth Week, also called the Great Tribulation. The warning about the flight not being on the sabbath day refers to Jewish tradition which forbad the Jews from traveling more than seven furlongs or a little less than a mile. This is called "a sabbath day's journey" in Acts 1:12.

e. There will be judgments upon Israel (Mt. 24:16-20). Though Israel is back in her land today and has a modern state, she is still in a rebellious, unconverted condition. God's judgment upon her will not be completed until the days described in Matthew 24. The Tribulation is called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7).

f. A remnant of Jews will be converted (Mt. 24:22).

(1) Two-thirds of the Jews living at that time will perish in the judgments, but one-third will repent and believe in Jesus as Christ. See Eze. 20:33-38; Zec. 13:8-9.

(2) The remnant of believing Jews will flee to a place where God will protect them (Re. 12:6).

g. There will be judgments upon the whole world (Mt. 24:21-22). Compare Isaiah 2:10-21.

(1) These are described in Old Testament prophecies (e.g., Isa. 2:10-21).

(2) These are described in Revelation 8-16 under the trumpet judgments and the vial judgments.

A third part of the sea will be turned to blood and a third of the ships destroyed (Re. 8:7-9).

A third part of the waters will be made bitter (Re. 8:10-11).

Demonic armies will torment and destroy men (Re. 9:1-19). One-third of mankind will perish in this one judgment.

The Antichrist will force all men to worship him and will kill those who refuse (Re. 13:15-18).

Men will be scorched with the sun and gnaw their tongues for pain (Re. 16:8-11).

A great earthquake will shake the world so terribly that the mountains will fall and the islands will flee away (Re. 16:18-20).

Hail stones weighing 100 pounds will fall upon the earth (Re. 16:21).

h. Christ will return (Mt. 24:27-31). His return occurs immediately after the Tribulation.

(1) His return will be visible to the whole world.

(2) He will return in power and glory in contrast to His first coming.

(3) He will destroy the Antichrist's armies that will be gathered together in Israel in the valley of Megiddo (Re. 16:13-16; 19:11-21).

(4) The nations will mourn His coming (Mt. 24:30), because they know that their rebellion will be judged. Compare Re. 1:7. Man knows in his heart and conscience that there is a holy God to whom he is accountable, even though they try to suppress this knowledge. See Ro. 1:18-19. Christ's return will mark the end of the day of man and the beginning of the day of the Lord. God will reign on earth and His law will be obeyed.

(5) He will judge all unbelievers and rebels (2 The. 1:7-9).

(6) He will establish His global kingdom with its headquarters in Jerusalem.

For a more extensive study of Christ's prophecies and Bible prophecy in general see *The Future According to the Bible* and Way of Life Literature's Advanced Bible Studies Series course *Understanding Bible Prophecy*. The 2012 edition is enlarged and refined.

4. New Testament believers and Matthew 24

For the following reasons we know that the believers mentioned on earth during the Tribulation of Matthew 24 are not church-age saints:

a. The Tribulation pertains to Israel and to the world, not to the church. It is called "the time of the heathen" (Eze. 30:3) and "the Lord's controversy with the nations" (Jer. 25:31). But the church is not part of the nations. God has called us out from among the nations to be a special people for His name (Acts 15:13). The tribulation is also called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). Jacob is not the father of the church; he is the father of the 12 tribes of Israel.

b. In the book of Revelation, the church is not seen on earth after chapter 3. The church will be raptured before the beginning of the Tribulation.

c. For church-age saints, the coming of Christ is imminent, meaning it can happen at any time. Therefore, it is not preceded by the signs described in Matthew 24 and in the book of Revelation. Otherwise, we would know exactly when Christ will return, because we could watch the signs unfold beginning with the Antichrist's false peace agreement with Israel.

d. Matthew 24:33 is talking about the signs that precede the Lord's return in glory, not His return to catch away church-age saints.

5. The importance of knowing these prophecies

Since the New Testament believer will not go through this Tribulation, why is it important that we know these things?

a. It should motivate us to make sure that we are truly saved (Mt. 24:48-51). There are multitudes of nominal Christians that profess Christ but do not possess Him, and their lives witness to this fact (Titus 1:16).

b. It should motivate us to be walking daily in fellowship with the Lord and busy serving Him so that we are ready for the Rapture at all times (Mt. 24:44).

Matthew 25 Parables, Judgment of the Nations

Parable of the Virgins (Mt. 25:1-13)

The first word of Matthew 25 tells us that the parable of the ten virgins is given in the context of Christ's coming and of the establishment of the kingdom of God in Israel. See Mt. 25:31-34. It has application to church age saints, but it pertains particularly to Jews during the Tribulation.

The virgins represent those who profess faith in Jesus as the Christ.

The lamps represent a believer's witness or testimony.

The oil signifies the Holy Spirit who is the life and power of the believer's witness. See Ro. 8:9.

The bridegroom is Christ, and His tarrying is an unexpected delay in His return.

Many Jews will profess Jesus as the Christ during the early part of the Tribulation when the gospel of the kingdom is preached by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists and the two prophets in Jerusalem, but some will have the reality of salvation and some will not. They will be expectant of His immediate return, but they will become distracted by the conditions that exist in the Tribulation and will lose their sense of expectation.

The five virgins with oil depict true Jewish believers in Christ.

The five virgins without oil depict unsaved Jewish professors of faith in Christ.

The midnight cry is the announcement of the coming of Christ to bless His people. These are the signs in the heavens as described in Mt. 24:29-30.

All those who profess faith in Christ will try to prepare themselves to meet Christ, but only those who have been converted and have the Holy Spirit will be accepted.

The fact that Christ says, "I know you not" (Mt. 25:12) proves that the virgins with no oil are not saved and never were saved. "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tim. 2:19).

Some lessons from this parable:

- The main lesson is that Jesus will come at any time, and the believer must be watching (Mt. 25:13). Every parable has one main lesson, and it is usually identified in the parable itself or in the immediate context. "We might illustrate the need for readiness in a different way. Firemen are trained and equipped to fight fires. They know there will be fires, but they don't know when. And so they are in a constant state of readiness, even when they sleep. Their clothing is all laid out so they can quickly dress and get to the fire. Sometimes I see the fire truck outside the grocery store where I shop. The firemen are in the store, buying food. But they also have their portable radios in hand, ready to rush out if word of a fire is received" ("The Ten Virgins," Bible.org).

- It is possible to profess Christ without possessing Christ.

- The opportunity for salvation has an end.

- Salvation is a personal relationship with Christ as we see in the wise virgins. In contrast, the foolish virgins have faith in man and seek salvation from man. Many trust in churches and preachers and priests rather than in Christ Himself.

- Salvation is a personal matter. My faith in Christ can only save me; it cannot save my family and friends.

- It is possible for a believer to sleep and backslide.

- Believers are not to sleep but are to be always ready for Christ's return.

- The believer's lamp needs to be trimmed so the oil will flow freely and the light will shine brightly. This is a picture of the believer who is confessing his sin, putting off the old man and putting on the new man, loving God's Word, walking in the Spirit, praying, serving and obeying Christ, separating from the evil things of the world.

- Those who are saved do not lose their salvation if they are spiritually careless. They are sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).

Parable of the Talents (Mt. 25:14-30)

The parable of the talents is also given in the context of Christ's coming and of the establishment of the kingdom of God in Israel. See Mt. 25:31-34.

Lessons

1. Christ gives gifts to His people, and they are responsible to use them for His service. The believer is not saved to sit, but to serve. He is not saved to continue to serve himself and to do his own will, but to serve Christ.

2. Each believer has different gifts and ministries that God gives according to His will. The believer's part is to find his divine calling and do it.

3. Each believer will give account to Christ for his service. Compare 1 Co. 3:11-15.

4. The wicked servant is a false professor. He is not a believer who loses his salvation; he is an individual who never had salvation. The fact that this man is called a servant does not mean that he is saved. The Jews are called the Lord's servants, but they were not all saved (Isa. 43:10).

a. The man's concept of the Lord shows that he is a lost man. He considered the Lord "an hard man" who reaped where He had not sown. It is obvious that he did not know the blessed Lord Jesus Christ! The Lord is exactly the opposite of how this man describes Him. He is gracious and merciful and patient and meek and lowly in heart; He gives us MUCH more than we deserve, and He does not ask anything from us that He has not first given us.

b. The man's destiny shows that he is a lost man.

(1) He is cast away, whereas John 6:37 promises that Jesus will not "cast out" the believer.

(2) He is cast into outer darkness, whereas the Bible says believers are children of light and are not of darkness (1 The. 5:5).

5. Hell is an awful place. Christ often warned about hell and made no attempt to spare His listeners of its terror. Here it is described as outer darkness (Mt. 25:30). Compare 2 Pe. 2:17 - "the mist of darkness is reserved for ever" and Jude 13 - "blackness of darkness for ever." Christ also describes hell as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. By comparing other passages, we learn that the weeping consists of a terrible wailing. Compare Mt. 13:42, 50.

Judgment of the Gentile Nations (Mt. 24:31-46)

When the Lord returns, He will establish His kingdom in Israel and will rule the world. At that time He will judge the Gentile nations and separate the "sheep" from the "goats." His sheep will enter the kingdom, but the "goats" will be cast into the lake of fire (Mt. 25:31-46).

1. The preparation for the judgment (Mt. 13:40-43, 49-50).

It appears from these prophecies that the angels will divide mankind at Christ's return. They will sever the wicked from the just. It's a little difficult to understand the exact timeline of these events and how they fit together, but this is how it appears.

The activity of the angels as described in Matthew 13 (verses 41-42, 49-50) must be associated with the judgment described in Matthew 25. If these things were unconnected, it would be difficult to see how they could be reconciled, because we are told that the angels will gather the wicked from among the nations and cast them into hell fire. If this is not associated directly with Christ's judgment of the nations, then there would be no "goats" for Him to judge. How could there be two separations of the wicked from the just at Christ's return?

Therefore, we believe that it is the angels who will sever the sheep from the goats as described in Matthew 25 in preparation for the judgment of the nations.

2. The basis of the judgment

The basis will be a nation's response to the gospel of the kingdom that will be preached by Jewish evangelists (Mt. 24:14) and its attitude toward the elect Jews (Joel 3:1-8). That the basis of the judgment of the nations is how they treat the Jews during the Tribulation is evident by Jesus' words in Matthew 25:40.

In the Great Tribulation, Jesus' people on earth will be the Jews who receive Him as their Messiah and those who are converted through their preaching. When Jesus says, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat ..." (Mt. 25:42-43), He is referring to the persecuted Jews and Jewish proselytes of the Tribulation period. Those who do not have the mark of the beast will not be allowed to buy or sell, so they will have a difficult time finding food (Re. 13:16-17).

This is evident in the book of Revelation. After chapter three, we don't see the churches on earth. The promise to the church of Philadelphia and to every other true New Testament church that keeps God's Word will be fulfilled when the New Testament saints are taken away at the Rapture (Re. 3:10).

During the Tribulation, God will regenerate Israel and 144,000 Jewish evangelists will preach the gospel of the kingdom and announce the soon return of Christ (Mt. 24:14; Re. 7:1-9). As a result, multitudes will be saved out of every nation and tongue. Further, the two Jewish witnesses will preach in Jerusalem for three and a

half years and perform miracles (Revelation 11:1-6). At the end of the first half of Daniel's Seventieth Week, the Antichrist will begin to reign over the earth with cruelty (Re. 13:15-18). He will kill the Jewish evangelists in Jerusalem, and after three and a half days they will be raised up and ascend to heaven (Re. 11:7-12). After this, the Antichrist will overcome Israel (Re. 13:7-10) and the remnant will flee into the wilderness where they will be protected by God (Re. 12:12-17). The Antichrist will viciously persecute the Jews (Mt. 24:15-21; Dan. 7:21-25; 8:23-25; 11:32-34). As in the days of Hitler, they will be hunted by the Antichrist's gestapo.

The people of the earth will see these things and will have a choice of whether to help the Jews or curse them, similar to the choice they had during World War II under Hitler's regime. At the end of the Tribulation Christ will judge the nations on the basis of their treatment of persecuted Israel.

During the Nazi Holocaust, many individuals aided the Jews, oftentimes to their own destruction. Those who do this type of thing during the Tribulation apparently will be proclaimed as "sheep."

In fact, one entire European nation stood out as a helper of the Jews during the Holocaust. This was Denmark.

> "The attitude of the Danes toward the Jews was in marked contrast to that of almost all the rest of Europe, where most citizens either cooperated in the roundup of Jewish citizens, or remained indifferent to their fate. In Denmark the police refused to participate in rounding up the Jews: King Christian X encouraged the pro-Jewish forces by announcing that all Danish citizens were one ... [The country sent] virtually the entire Jewish community by boat into Sweden ... The rescue was carried out over three weeks, and when the Nazis came to deport the Jews on October 1-2, 1943, they found only about four hundred who had not yet escaped. ... Thus, only about 2 percent of Danish Jewry perished during the Holocaust, less than one fortieth of the percentage of Jews killed in much of Europe. At the war's end, when the Danish Jews came back from Sweden, most found their property intact" (Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, pp. 424-425).

The judgment of the nations is based on God's promise to Abraham, that He would bless them that bless him and curse them that curse him (Gen. 12:1-3). This was emphasized by the prophets (Jer. 48:25-27; Eze. 25:2-3, 12, 15; 26:2; 35:5, 12-15; Oba. 1:10-14).

3. Is this salvation by works?

Paul says in Romans 4 that salvation has always been by grace through faith (Ro. 4:1-8). Abraham before the law and David under the law and believers in the New Testament dispensation are all saved by grace without works. Paul explains that if men could be saved by their works, it would allow them to boast. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith" (Ro. 3:27).

We know therefore that those who are received into Christ's kingdom who survive the Tribulation will be saved by grace through faith and not by their works. Their works will be *the evidence* of their faith in God, just as Abraham's works were the evidence of his faith (Jam. 2:21-22). They will be saved by their faith just as Rahab the Jericho harlot was saved when she hid the Jewish spies.

> "This passage has puzzled expositors because there is no preaching of the Cross, there is no statement of the Gospel as necessary for salvation, and all the passage speaks of is the contrast of the works of the sheep and the goats. The answer to this problem, however, is not a denial that salvation is based on faith and grace alone (Ro. 3:10-12, 21, 28). The passage can be seen in the light of James 2:26 which declares, 'faith without works is dead.' What is here presented is not the ground of salvation but the fruit of salvation" (John Walvoord, *Every Prophecy of the Bible*, pp. 399, 401).

> "During the seven years of the Tribulation, everyone on this earth will hear the truth of the gospel of Christ (Matthew 24:14). ... The internal, spiritual condition of the Gentiles is revealed externally by the way they treat Israel during the Great Tribulation. This is valid proof of true righteousness because of the intense persecution that Israel will endure during the second half of the Tribulation period. Jews forced to flee death and destruction will have no means of caring for themselves. The righteous Gentiles, at great risk to themselves, will provide food and shelter for the covenant people and will show many other acts of kindness. ... They are righteous because they were saved by grace, but they expressed their righteousness through their care for Jesus' 'brothers' during those terrible days. In like manner, the deeds of the unrighteous ('goats') reveal their true spiritual condition. Their unbelief of the gospel message is seen by their anti-Semitism" (Tim LaHay and Ed Hindson, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy*, p. 175).

4. The result of the judgment (Mt. 25:34, 41)

The ones who are rejected by Christ will be cast into the same lake of fire where the Antichrist and his false prophet are cast at Christ's return (Re. 19:20).

5. The Bible describes two other judgments. Contrary to popular teaching, there will not be one general judgment of mankind.

a. The judgment of Christian believers in heaven (1 Co. 3:11-15). This will probably occur after the Rapture and before the Return of Christ to earth.

b. The judgment of the unsaved after the millennium (Re. 20:10-15)

Matthew 26 The Lord's Supper

All four of the Gospels record the betrayal, trial, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This is obviously the focal point of His coming. Compare Luke 19:10.

Matthew 26 describes the events that occurred during the two days before the crucifixion (verse 2).

Jesus again warns His disciples that He will be put to death (Mt. 26:1-2).

1. He had been telling them this for a long time, but they were not able to receive it (Mt. 16:21; 17:22; 20:17-18).

2. Their minds were blocked by their view that the Messiah was going to establish His kingdom (Mt. 16:21-22).

a. It is important that we allow the Word of God to speak for itself and not force our preconceived ideas upon it.

b. We must walk in the Spirit so that we can understand the Scriptures.

The Jewish leaders determine to kill Jesus (Mt. 26:3-5).

1. The Pharisees had determined to kill Jesus from the beginning of His public ministry (Mt. 12:14).

2. Here we see all of the Jewish leaders involved in the conspiracy -- the chief priests, the scribes, the elders, and the high priest. This was the entire "Sanhedrin" or great council of the Jewish nation.

3. They were willing to use lies (Mt. 26:4). False teachers today also use lies.

They are called "deceitful workers" (2 Co. 11:13).

They sneak in (Gal. 2:4).

They speak lies (1 Tim. 4:2).

They use feigned words (2 Pet. 2:3).

4. They feared the people (Mt. 26:5). Godly leaders do not fear the people but fear God and speak truth to the people. Ungodly leaders fear the people more than God and they teach those things that the people want to hear (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

The woman anoints Jesus' head (Mt. 26:6-13)

1. Jesus is back in Bethany.

2. Jesus is anointed on three different occasions.

In every case, Jesus was anointed by a woman. This is one of the reasons why we know that the Gospels are written by divine inspiration and not by man's natural thinking. The Jewish male disciples would not naturally have honored women as we see in these reports. They would have tried to downplay the women and exalt themselves, but in the Gospels we see pure ungarnished truth.

a. In Luke 7:37-39, an unnamed woman anoints Christ's feet.

(1) This occurred in a Pharisee's house. Jesus was still in Galilee far from Jerusalem (Lk. 7:11).

(2) On this occasion it was a Pharisee who complained because of the character of the woman.

b. In John 12:1-5, Mary anoints Christ's feet.

(1) This occurs six days before the passover in the house of Mary and Martha in Bethany near Jerusalem.

(2) Only Judas is said to complain about the expense.

c. In Matthew 26:6-13 (and Mark 14:3-6) an unnamed woman anoints Christ's head.

(1) This occurs two days before the passover in Bethany in Simon the leper's house.

(2) On this occasion, all of the disciples complain about the expense (Mt. 26:8-9).

3. Nothing is wasted that is devoted to the Lord and His service, but it is not uncommon for onlookers to criticize an individual's zeal. David's brother is an example (1 Sam. 17: 26-29).

4. Jesus takes note of sacrifices made for Him, and He rewards them.

5. Jesus promises the writing and preservation of the Gospels (Mt. 26:13). The Scriptures have been preserved by God (Psalm 12:6-7). Christ's promise proves that He is the Son of God.

Judas agrees to betray Jesus (Mt. 26:14-16)

1. Judas was a thief (Joh. 12:6).

   a. He had not been converted. Salvation changes a person (2 Co. 5:17). A thief can be saved, but he will stop being a thief. We see this in the members of the church at Corinth (1 Co. 6:10-11). Judas had heard the words of Christ and the promise of eternal life through faith in Christ, but Judas did not respond to the gospel and humble himself as a needy sinner and receive salvation. Contrast Zacchaeus, who received Christ and was converted and stopped being a thief (Lk. 19:8).

   b. Now when Judas knows that Jesus will soon die, he determines to make some money from it. He was always looking for a way to benefit himself and to make money.

   c. He doesn't have faith that Christ is the Saviour Messiah who will rise from the dead.

2. Jesus knew that Judas would betray him (Joh. 6:70).

3. Judas offered his services to the chief priests, thus solving their problem. They were afraid to arrest Jesus before the people, and they didn't know where He spent His time away from the crowds.

4. Judas was paid 30 pieces of silver, which was the price of a slave (Ex. 21:32). The lovely Creator was sold for the price of a slave.

The Lord's Supper (Mt. 26:17-30)

The place where Jesus had the Last Supper is marked on *Map 10 Christ's Final Days.*

1. Jesus identified Judas as the betrayer.

   a. The dipped bread (Mt. 26:23) was a fulfillment of Psalm 41:9.

b. The disciples did not suspect Judas. "Note, It is possible for a hypocrite to go through the world, not only undiscovered, but unsuspected; like bad money so ingeniously counterfeited that nobody questions it" (Matthew Henry).

c. Since that day, many others who have supped with Jesus at His table in the churches have been hypocrites and liars.

d. Jesus warned that Judas' punishment would be worse than ceasing to exist (Mt. 26:24). This teaches us that the God's judgment of the unsaved is not annihilation!

2. Jesus changed the passover to the Lord's Supper as the memorial of His death and shed blood (Mt. 26:26-30). The passover pointed ahead to Christ's cross, whereas the Lord's Supper looks back to the cross.

a. It required the cup *and* the bread, signifying that both Christ's blood (Heb. 9:22) and death (Ro. 6:23) are required for our salvation. Both are seen together in Romans 5:9-10.

b. It was a simple meal, not an elaborate ritual. There were no priests. Contrast the Catholic mass.

c. It is symbolic not literal

(1) Luke says so (Lk. 22:19).

(2) Paul says so (1 Co. 11:23-26).

(3) In John 6:35, Jesus explained the meaning of the symbol. To eat and drink means to come to and believe on Christ.

(4) The Catholic Church claims that Mt. 26:26 is literal, but it inconsistently says that John 6:35 is symbolic.

d. The Lord's Supper incorporates the fruit of the vine, not alcoholic wine (Mt. 26:29). Alcoholic wine is man-made; it requires human intervention. It does not properly signify the sinless and holy blood of Christ.

e. The Lord's Supper points to the coming of Christ (Mt. 26:29). Compare 1 Co. 11:26.

f. Jesus taught the disciples to examine themselves before the meal (Mt. 26:21-22). Compare 1 Co. 11:28-32.

g. Christian music in the New Testament was simple hymns often sung without instruments (Mt. 26:30).

(1) This does not mean that it is wrong to use instruments; it means that the instrumentation should not be the focus.

(2) It means that there was nothing like a rock concert in a New Testament assembly.

Jesus' warning and Peter's boast (Mt. 26:31-35)

1. Every part of Christ's death was a fulfillment of prophecy (compare Zec. 13:7).

2. Though the disciples deserted Jesus, He did not desert them (Mt. 26:32).

3. Peter's sin

a. Peter was boasting, claiming to be better than the other disciples (Mt. 26:33). The others had also said that they would die with Jesus (Mt. 26:35), but Peter claimed to be better than them all. This pride was his downfall (Prov. 16:18).

b. Peter had confidence in himself rather than in the Lord. He did not say, "The Lord willing" or "by God's grace." Rather he boasted in his own ability to stand by Christ. Compare 1 Co. 10:12.

4. Jesus prophesied that before the cock would crow, Peter would deny Him three times (Mt. 26:34). Mark alone adds the detail of the specific number of times the cock would crow—"twice"—whereas the other accounts only mention the cock crowing in a general sense.

Jesus washes the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17)

Jesus knew all things and was in control of the situation at all times (Joh. 13:3). He knew who He was, where He came from, why He was on earth, and where He was going. He was the Master of every moment.

Christ's footwashing was done as an example of love and service. It was done in reply to the disciples' argument about who would be greatest in the kingdom of God (Lk. 22:24-26). Jesus taught them that the greatest is he that serves, and He illustrated this by washing their feet.

Footwashing is not a church ordinance. It is never mentioned in the New Testament epistles as an ordinance alongside baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Peter continued to be self-willed and independent of spirit (Joh. 13:8-10). Earlier he had rebuked Jesus for saying that He was going to die (Mt. 16:21-23). We see how that Peter's misunderstanding of what Christ had come to do resulted in confusion and backsliding. He thought Jesus was going to set up the kingdom of God, and when Jesus submitted to the mob that came to arrest Him and refused to let the disciples fight and rebuked Peter for wielding the sword, Peter got offended and the devil had his way in his life in that situation.

Peter's protest gave Jesus an opportunity to teach about salvation, that there is eternal regeneration and daily sanctification, position and practice, relationship and fellowship (Joh. 13:8-10). When Peter asked Jesus to wash him entirely, Jesus replied that there is *one* washing of the body and *many* washings of the feet. "Jesus saith to him, He that is washed [*louo*] needeth not save to wash his feet [*nipto*], but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all" (John 13:10).

The first Greek word for wash is *louo*, meaning to bathe. It refers to the bath of regeneration ("by the washing of regeneration," Titus 3:5). The second Greek word for wash is *nipto*, which is used for washing one's face, hands, and feet (Mt. 6:17; 15:2). This is illustrated by the laver in the Old Testament tabernacle. The priest was washed entirely in water when he started his ministry, which depicts regeneration (Lev. 8:6). After that the priest was required to wash his hands and feet before he could enter the tabernacle to serve God (Ex. 30:19-20). There was one bath and many washings. This signifies that sinners must be washed once in the new birth by the blood of Christ, and they must then be cleansed daily by confession and obedience. Compare 1 Co. 6:11; 1 Joh. 1:6-9.

Jesus' comforts the disciples (John 14)

This chapter contains more of Jesus' teaching at the Last Supper in the upper room. At the end of this chapter, Christ departs the upper room to go to Gethsemane (Joh. 14:30-31).

In this entire section Jesus is preparing the disciples for His death (Joh. 13:1). He is facing the terrible personal suffering that would begin that night, but His mind is on the disciples and their needs. They are fearful and confused about what is happening. They vaguely understand that Jesus is actually going to die, but they don't know why. They don't know what is going to happen to Him or to them. He told them He would rise from the dead, but they don't yet understand or believe it.

The Old Testament's teaching on death is not very clear. The clarity of the doctrine of death and eternal life was revealed in the New Testament (2 Tim. 1:10).

The words "comfort" and "peace" are repeated eight times in John 14-16.

1. He teaches them about fear and anxiety.

The believer can control his heart (Joh. 14:1, 27).

Fears and doubts and anxiety will come into the heart, but they don't have to control it. The believer can overcome these things.

a. We overcome fear and anxiety by the knowledge of God (Joh. 14:1). Jesus said that He is God. Jesus shows us what God is like. In Jesus, we understand God's character, that He is compassionate, longsuffering, dependable, unchanging. We can trust Him in every situation. We can wait on Him to fulfill His promises. We can have confidence that He will never leave us or forsake us.

b. We overcome fear and anxiety by God's promises (Joh. 14:1-3). The promises of God to the believer are myriad and bountiful. There is a promise for every need and every situation. Peter called them "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Pet. 1:4). The promises of God are available but they must be used. The believer must take up the promise and wield it as a shield against the devil's fiery darts of fear and doubt.

c. We overcome fear and anxiety by prayer (Joh. 14:13-14).

(1) Christ not only invites His people to pray; He urges His people to pray. He wants them to pray. He says that answered prayer glorifies the Father in the Son.

(2) To pray effectively is to pray in Jesus' name. This doesn't mean merely adding the words "in Jesus' name" to the end of the prayer. It means to pray in God's will, to pray for those things that please and glorify Christ. It is the opposite of praying for things to consume on our lusts (Jam. 4:3).

d. We overcome fear and anxiety by the Holy Spirit (Joh. 14:15-28). We deal with Christ's teaching on the Spirit later in a separate study, but the indwelling Spirit is a major "resource" for victory over fear and anxiety. He is called the Comforter. The Greek word is *parakletos*, which means one who comes alongside to help.

e. We overcome fear and anxiety by the love of God (Joh. 14:21). Note that Jesus said the believer is loved by the Father and by the Son. The knowledge that I am loved by the Triune God is the greatest comfort and source of stability in time of trial imaginable. He is love; He is the author and source of all love. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (2 Th. 2:16-17).

2. Christ teaches them about heaven (Joh. 14:1-3).

Jesus is the only Man who has lived in heaven and come down to earth to tell us about it.

a. Christ describes heaven as *a real place*. Elsewhere in Scripture it is called "paradise" (2 Co. 12:4) and "a country" and "a city" (Heb. 11:16). When Paul went to the third heaven, he didn't know if he was in the body or out of the body, which tells us that it was a place where his experience was so like his experience in a body on earth that he couldn't tell the difference (2 Co. 12:1-4).

b. Christ describes heaven as *a sure place for the believer* (Joh. 14:1). The certainty of salvation is a great comfort, but this comfort is only for those who are born again.

c. Christ describes heaven as a *homely place*, a household, a family. It is the Father's house. It is the home of a Father and His children, an interesting, happy place, a place where the children can enjoy intimate fellowship with their glorious Father and with one another, where they can enjoy the Father's infinite bounty and gifts, where they can plumb the depths of His wisdom and partake of His character, where they can serve Him.

d. Christ describes heaven as a *glorious place*. It is a place of mansions built by God the Chief Architect. Heaven is called "paradise" three times (Lk. 23:43; 2 Co. 12:4; Re. 2:7). This is from "paradisos," the Greek equivalent of the Armenian word "pairidaeza" used by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians to describe the splendid botanical gardens and zoos surrounding their palaces. Assurnasirpal II described the *paradisos* in Calah as follows: "I irrigated the meadows of the Tigris and planted orchards with all kinds of fruit trees in its environs. ... The canal cascades from above into the gardens. Fragrance pervades the walkways. Streams of water as numerous as the stars of heaven flow in the pleasure garden. Pomegranates which are bedecked with clusters like grape

vines. ... I, Assurnasirpal, in the delightful garden pick fruit like a squirrel" (Joan and David Oates, *Nimrud: An Assyrian Imperial City Revealed*, p. 33). At Cyrus' gardens in Pasargadae, water flowed through "a network of some 3,600 feet of stone conduits into handsome square basins, hewed from a single block of dressed stone." The water running beside the paths "kept the garden moist and added a glittering, fluid element" (*Persians: Masters of Empire*, Time-Life, 1995, pp. 62, 66). But these ancient pagan "paradisos" were as nothing compared to the paradise of God! The paradise of God will be eternal spring; it will never be blasted by the heat of summer or frozen by the cold of winter. It will never fall into neglect and ruin. The variety of its delights will be as infinite as its chief Gardener.

e. Christ describes heaven as *a large place*. There are many mansions.

f. Christ describes heaven as *a place where He is* (Joh. 14:3). Regardless of how beautiful and splendid it is, heaven would not be heaven if Jesus were not there as the central focus of its delights!

3. Christ teaches about the exclusiveness of salvation (Joh. 14:6).

a. This is one of the most important verses in Scripture. We will never find the end of the meaning of this one verse.

b. It is a dogmatic statement that destroys the efficacy of every religion and philosophy. It shows all of them to be false. Either Jesus alone is the way, the truth, and the life, or He was a deceiver.

c. Jesus is the way. He is the only way to God, the only Saviour, the sole Mediator between God and man.

d. Jesus is the truth. He is the touchstone of truth. Everything that is contrary to Jesus Christ and His Words is false.

e. Jesus is the life. Scientists have plumbed some of the mysteries and power of the atom, but that is not life. They are searching for the "God particle." They know that something holds everything together, but in their willful blindness they don't know what it is. They have unravelled some of the mysteries of DNA, but that is chemistry. Where is the life? It is Jesus Christ, the Creator. He is what scientists are searching for but will never find through a microscope. By him all things consist, and He upholds all things by the Word of His power (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3).

4. Christ teaches about greater works (Joh. 14:12).

I believe this was fulfilled through the ministry of the apostles and their sign gifts (2 Co. 12:12). For example, more were saved on the day of Pentecost through Peter's preaching than had been saved through the entire earthly ministry of Jesus. And Jesus preached only in the tiny land of Israel, whereas the apostles preached to the ends of the earth.

5. Christ teaches about the Holy Spirit.

As we have seen, the Holy Spirit is a major emphasis of Christ's teaching in John 14-16. He is mentioned seven times.

a. Christ was preparing the disciples for His return to heaven. They were going to face every sort of trouble and persecution in this world, with empires aligned against them, yet they were not going to be alone. The Spirit of God would be with them and would provide them with everything necessary for victory.

(1) The Spirit is the reason why the world was turned upside down by the witness of the early believers.

(2) The Spirit is the reason why true Christians and true churches still exist in this world in spite of 2,000 years of persecution.

(3) The Spirit is the reason why *Jesus* is the most well-known name on earth, in spite of the fact that He was a man of lowly birth in the little village of Bethlehem and grew up in the despised town of Nazareth as a carpenter, a Man without recognition from any of this world's great institutions, and His followers were mostly simple tradesmen with no worldly distinction, wealth, or authority.

b. The Holy Spirit is Christ's gift to those who obey Him (Joh. 14:15-16, 21, 23-24).

(1) This is emphasized by repetition.

(2) Christ is not saying that salvation is by works. That would contradict what He plainly taught earlier in the Gospel (e.g., Joh. 3:16; 6:28-29). Rather, He is emphasizing that obedience is the evidence of saving faith. The individual's attitude toward and relationship with God's Word is one of the clearest evidences of salvation. Christ is contrasting true Christians with false ones. He is looking down through the corridor of the church age and

seeing the multitudes of nominal, unregenerate Christians who profess Him with the mouth but do not submit to Him as Lord. I think of the church I grew up in. All of the young people professed Christ, but I don't recall even one who loved His Word and sought to obey Him. I was a professing Christian and a church member for many years before I came into a life-changing relationship with Christ and began to love His Word and seek His will. Christ was also thinking of the multitudes who put their trust in false christs and false gospels. He was thinking of the crowd that He described in Matthew 7:21-23. He was thinking of Judas.

(3) Christ was also not saying that perfect obedience is necessary for receiving the Holy Spirit. The disciples whom He was comforting in John 14 were far from perfect! Peter was only hours away from denying Christ publicly, emphatically, repeatedly, and with cursing. None of them believed the words that Christ was trying to teach them about His death and resurrection. Even after the resurrection, after He had appeared to some of them, He had to reprove them for their unbelief, even calling them fools and slow of heart to believe (Lk. 24:25). They were striving with one another, jealous, arguing about who would be greatest in Christ's kingdom. But they were true believers (excepting Judas Iscariot). They had believed on Jesus as the Messiah and surrendered to Him as Lord and Saviour. They fell far short of obeying in all things, but they wanted to obey. When the crowds turned away because they didn't agree with Christ's teaching, the true disciples stayed and professed their faith in Him (John 6:66-69).

c. The Holy Spirit is "another Comforter" (Joh. 14:16).

(1) The Greek word translated "Comforter" is *parakletos*, which means "one who comes alongside to help." It is a beautiful description of God's character and His tender care for His people.

(2) In 1 John 2:1, where *parakletos* is translated "advocate," it refers to Jesus as our High Priest. The Holy Spirit comes in the place of Christ to perform His ministry in the believer's life. He reveals Christ to the believer's heart and imparts Christ's life to him (Joh. 14:18, 21). The world mocks our faith as "blind," but the individual who believes in Christ has the witness in himself. The evidence lives within us. Christ manifests Himself to the believer. The Greek word for manifest is "emphanizo" (Joh. 14:21), which is also translated "declare," "inform," and "show." God will prove Himself to

any individual who seeks Him (Prov. 8:17; Jer. 29:13), as He did to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39).

(3) Since the Holy Spirit is described as the Comforter, it is obvious that God does not want His people to be discouraged.

d. The Holy Spirit was *with* the disciples and would be *in* them (Joh. 14:17).

This looked ahead to Pentecost when the Spirit came to indwell the believers and to empower them for world evangelism. Since then, those who believe on Christ savingly receive the Spirit (Eph. 1:12-14). He dwells in them to minister to them and through them.

e. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (Joh. 14:17). He is called this four times in Scripture (Joh. 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6).

(1) God is truth. There is no lie or error in Him. The fact that the Spirit is called "truth" reveals that He is God. Only God is complete and pure truth. The Spirit's work in the world is to promote truth and exalt truth.

(2) God gave the Scriptures to be the preeminent source of truth in this world. "Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17).

(3) This is one of the evidences of the true Spirit as opposed to false spirits. The true Spirit teaches truth, and He will never teach or countenance error. The charismatic movement claims to be the preeminent Holy Spirit movement today, but it is filled with false Christianity, such as Roman Catholicism, which is the evidence that it is following a false spirit. I saw the evidence of this at the first ecumenical charismatic conference I attended with media credentials. It was in St. Louis in 1987, and the attendees represented 40 denominations, including Roman Catholic. A Catholic mass was held every morning, and some of the speakers were Catholic priests and nuns who prayed to Mary as Queen of Heaven and held multitudes of other heresies. One priest said that he was thankful for purgatory, because it is the only way he could get to heaven. Yet there was no division between the Catholics and non-Catholics. There was no reproving of heresy. All were in fellowship in the same spirit, but it was evident that it was not the Spirit of Truth.

f. The Holy Spirit would teach all things (Joh. 14:26).

(1) This amazing prophecy explains something of the mechanics of biblical inspiration, and Scripture cannot be understood without an understanding of its divine inspiration. The Holy Spirit taught the disciples what to write and He brought to remembrance what they needed to remember. This is how John could remember the details of what Christ said and prayed. This is how the disciples knew what things to select from the multitude of words and events in Christ's life and knew how to describe and order them in the Gospels.

(2) Paul knew that he was writing epistles by divine inspiration, and the churches received his epistles as the Word of God (1 Th. 2:13).

Christ's Teaching on the Way to Gethsemane

John's Gospel alone contains the words that Jesus spoke on the way from the upper room to Gethsemane. We find this teaching in John 15-17. At the end of John 14, Christ and the disciples depart the upper room after the last supper (Joh. 14:30-31). (We deal with John 17 in a separate chapter.)

Even as He faces the terrible suffering of the next 24 hours, the Lord is concerned for the disciples and continues to prepare them for His death.

> "The discourse in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters is the most tender and sublime that was ever pronounced in our world. No composition can be found anywhere so fitted to sustain the soul in trial or to support it in death" (Barnes).

The Vine and the branches (Joh. 15:1-25)

1. We see the Vine and the Husbandman (Joh. 15:1).

Jesus continues to teach about the Trinity. Here we see the Trinity working together to sanctify the believer. Christ is the Vine; the Father is the husbandman. The Father determines who is a true branch, and the Father prunes the true branches (Joh. 15:2). The Spirit is not specifically mentioned, but we know from Christ's teaching in this same context that He has a major role in the process of sanctification.

2. We see the importance of fruit.

a. Fruit bearing is the test of a true branch. Salvation is a life-changing experience; it is a new birth; it is a conversion; and there will be fruit as the Spirit of God works out His will in the believer's life. This passage does not teach that a true believer can lose his salvation and be cast away; it teaches that a true believer is attached to Christ and bears fruit, and if there is *no* fruit, there is no salvation. Judas is an example of a false Christian. Even as Jesus spoke these words, Judas was being taken away and was ready to be burned. The fact that fruit bearing is the test of a true branch teaches us that churches must look for fruit in those who profess Christ and desire to be baptized and join the assembly. The church in which I grew up was careless about this and received members on the flimsiest profession. As a result, the church was filled with

nominal Christians who had not experienced supernatural regeneration and was therefore spiritually dull and powerless.

b. Fruit bearing is the purpose of a true branch (Joh. 15:8, 16). The branch does not live for itself. It lives to bear fruit for the vine. The true Christian life is to die to self-will and to live unto Christ and His will. This is the picture portrayed by baptism.

3. We see the branch's part.

a. The branch's part is to abide in the Vine.

This is *not* done by doing nothing, by merely "resting" and "waiting." The abiding, fruitful Christian life is not passive. It is an active life of pursuing Christ's will through His Word, of obeying the Word, of acting in faith on God's promises and seeking things from God.

(1) *First, to abide in the vine and to bear fruit is done by believing and obeying God's Word*. The believer is saved by believing the Word (Joh. 15:3). And he grows by continuing in the Word (Joh. 15:7, 10). The Scripture is the instrument by which God calls sinners to salvation and by which He works in the believer's life. There can be no fruitful Christian life apart from an intimate relationship with the Bible.

(2) *Second, to abide in the vine and to bear fruit is done by prayer* (Joh. 15:7, 16). Twice in this passage Christ mentions prayer. God knows all things, but He has ordained that His people seek all things from Him through continual prayer (Phil. 4:6).

- Through prayer we get strength (Psa. 138:3), daily bread (Mt. 6:11), deliverance from evil (Mt. 6:13), open doors (Col. 4:3), wisdom (Jam. 1:5), healing (Jam. 5:15), relief of care (1 Pet. 5:7), a quiet and peaceable life (1 Tim. 2:1-2), anything according to God's will (1 Joh. 5:14-15).

- We are to pray without ceasing (1 Th. 5:17) and to pray always (Eph. 6::18).

- Through prayer we walk in fellowship with Christ and we have victory and fruit.

- Note that prayer must be in Jesus' name (Joh. 15:16). This means it must be according to Christ's will. "The key to getting what we want is wanting what he wants. To have Christ's words 'abiding' in us means more than merely

memorizing them. It means meditating on them until our conscious natures are impregnated with them, until they become a vital part of us, so that they enlighten our understanding, enthuse our emotions, energize our wills. When our innermost beings are influenced by the indwelling, pervading words of the Lord Jesus, then we can demand as our due and it shall be done--for the simple reason that there will be nothing out of harmony between what we want and what he wants" (John Phillips).

(3) *Third, to abide in the vine and to bear fruit is done by love* (Joh. 15:12, 17). To love God and to love one's neighbor is the essence of the life that pleases God. This is the royal law. It is the essence of the character of Christ to which the believer is predestined to be conformed (Ro. 8:29). It is the law that the believer exercises in the home (toward wife, husband, children), in the assembly toward the brethren, with friends, at work, everywhere, and as he does this he abides in Christ, pleases the Father, and bears good fruit.

b. The branch's part is not the vine's part.

Each has its own work. Christ is the Vine and He does the supernatural part of imparting life and fruit. If the believer tries to do the Vine's work, he will fail and be frustrated in his Christian life. But the branch has its own work to do, and as it abides in the vine it can do its work.

Jesus referred to this in Matthew 11:28-30. The believer has a yoke to put on and a burden to bear, but it is easy and light because Christ does the supernatural divine work that the believer cannot do. The believer's part is to do what the Word of God commands him to do, but to do it by depending on God, by casting his care upon God, by constant yielding to and trusting in God's enablement.

This is the life that is summarized in Galatians 2:20.

c. Note that Jesus knew that His words would be written down and available to the believers (Joh. 15:7).

4. We see the process of pruning.

a. Pruning is an intimate process. The Father knows exactly what pruning *each branch* needs and when it needs it to produce the most fruit.

b. Pruning is a process that requires trust and surrender. The branch doesn't understand what is happening; it doesn't see the big picture. Only the

husbandman sees the whole vineyard and understands the big picture of the pruning process. The branch must trust the husbandman (Romans 8:28).

c. Pruning can be a severe process. God uses tribulation to prune His people (Ro. 5:3-5). He uses every circumstance of life (Ro. 8:28). He uses the sharp sword of His Word to reveal sin and bring conviction and change at the deepest level of the human nature (Heb. 4:12). Consider the tea plant. It grows in the mountains where we live in South Asia and goes through cycles. From time to time the plants are pruned severely so that you would think that they are dead, but they aren't. They are going through a necessary stage in the production of quality tea. The Christian life is like that. We go through periods when it seems that the spiritual life is weak and we wonder what is happening and where God is. But those periods aren't permanent. God, the Great Farmer, is pruning us and preparing us for more fruit. Our part is to remain faithful through it all, to keep our faith in Him, to continue to seek Him and serve Him and trust Him. This process doesn't happen overnight. It can take years, even decades, for God to work various things into our lives.

5. We see spiritual warfare and a pilgrim lifestyle (Joh. 15:18-25).

a. The world is mentioned 33 times in John 15-17 and almost always in a negative sense.

(1) The world hates Christ and His people (Joh. 15:18-19, 24-25).

(2) The world needs to be reproved of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Joh. 16:11).

(3) The world persecutes God's people (Joh. 16:33).

(4) The world has not known the Father (Joh. 17:25).

b. Believers are not of this world; they are pilgrims in a foreign land (Heb. 11:13-16). They have been translated into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13), and their citizenship is in heaven (Ph. 3:20).

c. The world system was created by the sons of Cain in Genesis 4 and has been in rebellion to the holy Creator ever since. The world's god is the devil (2 Co. 4:4).

d. The world's rejection of Christ and hatred of His people become most evident when it is confronted with the absoluteness of Christ's Word (Joh. 15:20), the

exclusive claims of Christ (e.g., John 14:6), and God's command to repent (Acts 17:30). Professing Christians that have the world's acclaim, such as Billy Graham and Bono have this success because they soft sell God's Word (Lk. 6:26). They don't reprove the world (Eph. 5:11). Those who are the friend of the world are the enemy of Christ (Jam. 4:4).

Christ's teaching on the Trinity

1. Christ's last teaching to the disciples in the upper room and on the way to Gethsemane is a powerful exposition on the Trinity. In fact, this is the preeminent passage on the Trinity in the entire Bible.

a. The Trinity is seen in John 15:26, which mentions the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

b. Jesus mentions the Father 53 times in John 13-17. And He devotes 14 of the verses to the Spirit, who is called the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and the Spirit of truth.

c. Jesus describes His relationship with the Father which is the essence of the Trinity (Joh. 14:7-11). He calls the Father "my Father" and says the Father is greater than He (Joh. 14:28). But He also says that to see the Son is to see the Father (Joh. 14:9). He says He is in the Father and the Father in Him (Joh. 14:11). This is the mystery of the Trinity: The Son is one with the Father, the fullest revelation of the Father, but the Son is not the Father. There is one God, but there are three Persons in the eternal Godhead.

d. The Holy Spirit is described as a Person with the pronoun "he" (Joh. 14:26). He is distinct from the Father in that He teaches that which He hears from the Father (Joh. 16:13). But His coming is also said to be the coming of the Son (Joh. 14:18) and of the Father (Joh. 14:23). This is the Trinity.

e. The Holy Spirit's special work is to glorify the Son (Joh. 16:14). The Spirit remains in the background, so to speak, exalting the Son. The Father has exalted the Son and given Him a name above every name and made Him the head of the new creation, and the Spirit's work is to reveal these things. He teaches God's people about Christ and changes them into Christ's image (2 Co. 3:18). Those who are taught of the Spirit will honor Christ as Lord and only Saviour.

f. Prayer is addressed to the Father in the Son's name (Joh. 16:23). One of the most practical aspects of the Trinity is experienced in the believer's prayer life. Compare Matthew 6:6, 9; Romans 15:5-6.

2. Lessons on the Trinity in John 17

a. The Son talks to the Father about the approaching fulfillment of their eternal plan (Joh. 17:1, 3). The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, and the hour had come for this to be fulfilled.

b. The Father is called the only true God, but Jesus speaks of Himself as equal to God (Joh. 17:3). God is only known through the Son. The Son is not the Father, but He is one with the Father (Joh. 17:11). The Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father (Joh. 17:21).

c. The Son was in glory with the Father before the world was (Joh. 17:5). The relationship is eternal.

(1) Here glory refers to the kingly splendor of God's dwelling place. We see a glimpse of it in "Solomon in all his glory" (Mt. 6:29). When the queen of Sheba, who was from a wealthy kingdom herself, saw Solomon's splendid kingdom "there was no more spirit in her" (1 Ki. 10:5). God's glory is *much* greater, of course. Glory is light, beauty, gold, precious stones, rare woods, beautiful architecture, glorious clothing, intriguing odors, palaces, gardens, fountains. It refers to the heavenly paradise in all of its fabulous aspects.

(2) God spoke from that glory at Christ's transfiguration (2 Pet. 1:17). The cherubims are a part of that glory (Heb. 9:5).

(3) It's called "the glory of his power" (2 Th. 1:9).

(4) Jesus was received up into God's glory at His ascension (1 Tim. 3:16).

(5) The Father is called "the Father of glory" (Eph. 1:17) and the Son is called "the Lord of glory" (1 Co. 2:8).

(6) Isaiah saw God on His throne of glory with the seraphim crying "holy, holy, holy" (Joh. 12:41; Isa. 6:1-4).

(7) The glory of God will be seen in the Millennial Temple (Eze. 43:2-5; 44:4).

(8) The glory of God will lighten the New Jerusalem (Re. 21:23).

(9) The Son asks the Father that His people be with Him in glory (Joh. 17:24). Every believer will see Christ in His glory and will dwell in that same

glory (Col. 3:1-4). Believers will be conformed to the image of Christ and share forever in the love of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

d. The Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world (Joh. 17:24). Theirs is an eternal, holy love relationship. We are told that God is love (1 Joh. 4:8), and His love is shared between the members of the Trinity and is directed to all of the creation (John 3:16). Any love that man has is a tiny, dim reflection of God's infinite love.

More teaching on the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-14)

1. Jesus taught that it was expedient that He go away (John 16:7).

a. It was expedient that He go away in death, because without the atonement we have no salvation.

b. It was expedient that He go away to heaven, because without this we would not have the Holy Spirit. "They were not yet able to grasp the significance of the replacement of a limited bodily presence with an unlimited universal presence. They did not know the Holy Spirit yet; certainly they did not know him as Jesus knew him. Suppose that after his resurrection Jesus had announced to his disciples that, instead of going home to heaven and instead of sending the Holy Spirit, he had decided to stay himself. Suppose he had said, 'And now Peter, I intend to set up my headquarters here in Jerusalem. This upper room will do for the time being. I intend to stay for a very long time. You can be in charge of appointments. People will want to see me. No interview can last more than fifteen minutes. From time to time I will arrange a tour of other lands, but Jerusalem is to be my place of permanent residence. Audience with me will be in strict order of application. There is to be no favoritism, no concession to rank or privilege. Each person will be allowed a private audience and will be allowed to speak to me and request of me whatever is on their heart or mind.' We can imagine the result. Before long the waiting list would be endless. People would wait a lifetime for one brief interview. Many would never make it. Altogether, it would be an unsatisfactory arrangement. Instead, Jesus is accessible to one and all who call his name. The Holy Spirit is here to make good in our hearts all those great and exceeding precious promises that are part of the gospel of God's grace. No wonder Jesus said, 'It is expedient for you that I go away'" (John Phillips, commentary on the Gospel of John).

2. The Holy Spirit will reprove the world (Joh. 16:7-11).

a. The word "reprove" is from the Greek "elegcho," which is elsewhere translated "convict" (Joh. 8:9), "convince" (Joh. 8:46; 1 Co. 14:24), "tell a fault" (Mt. 18:15), and "rebuke" (1 Tim. 5:20). It is used of John the Baptist's reproof of Herod's immorality (Lk. 3:19) and of Christ's rebuke of the churches (Re. 3:19). This rebellious, undisciplined generation, even among most professing Christians, does not understand rebuke, but godly rebuke is essential for spiritual life and growth ("reproofs of instruction are the way of life," Prov. 6:23).

b. The Holy Spirit's work of reproving the world is done in conjunction with the believer's work of preaching the gospel. Christ said He would send the Spirit "unto you" and "when he is come, he will reprove the world." This is explained in Acts 1:8. It is through the believer's work of preaching the gospel that the Spirit works in unbelievers. The Spirit activates the gospel, bringing enlightenment and conviction to the sinner's heart. When the gospel is not preached, this conviction work is not done, because God has ordained that the gospel be preached to every person (Mark 16:15). This is His ordained instrument of saving souls.

c. The Spirit will reprove the world of sin (Joh. 16:9). This refers to sin in general, and to the sin of rejecting Christ in particular, which is the apex of man's sin. The gospel begins with man's sin and his estrangement from God because of sin. When Paul set out to preach the gospel in the epistle of Romans, he spent nearly three chapters preaching about sin and judgment before he got to the solution to man's problem, which is Christ's atonement. The good news of the gospel must be preceded by the bad news of man's lost condition and condemnation before God.

d. The Spirit will reprove the world of righteousness (Joh. 16:10). The Spirit shows men that God requires perfect righteousness. "Good works" and religion cannot provide the perfect righteousness that God demands (Isa. 64:6). The Spirit then points men to the perfect righteousness that is available through Christ (1 Co. 1:30; 2 Co. 5:21). This is the heart and soul of the gospel as preached in the epistle of Romans (Ro. 3:19-25). Christ is no longer in the world, but He is revealed to men by the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Spirit. Jesus' resurrection and ascension back to the Father was the evidence that He is the Christ and that His work of redemption was accepted by God (Acts 2:32-36; Ro. 1:4).

e. The Spirit will reprove the world of judgment (Joh. 16:11). The Spirit warns men of eternal judgment. The judgment of Satan points to the judgment of all unsaved sinners. Since the prince of this world is judged, all of his subjects are likewise judged (Eph. 2:2-3). Since Satan will suffer eternal punishment, so will all his subjects (Re. 20:10-15). By taking the sinner's place in death, Christ has destroyed the devil's power (Heb. 2:14). Warning of judgment is an integral and necessary part of preaching the gospel, as we see in the book of Acts (e.g., 2:40; 13:40-41; 17:30-31).

3. The Holy Spirit will guide into all truth (Joh. 16:13).

Here Christ prophesies of the inscripturization and canonization of the New Testament. The only right way to understand the nature of the New Testament is to understand that it is a product of the Spirit of God. The Spirit gave the words and led the disciples in receiving the right books as Scripture (1 Th. 2:13). It was not a haphazard process. It was not a merely human process. It was not a process left for Catholic councils.

4. The Holy Spirit will show things to come (Joh. 16:13).

a. This was fulfilled in the New Testament prophecies about the church age (e.g., 2 Timothy 3), the Tribulation (Revelation 6-18), the return of Christ (Re. 19), the Millennium and the Great White Throne judgment (Re. 20), and the New Heaven and the New Earth (Re. 21-22).

b. The prophecies of the church age have been fulfilled in perfect detail, and the other prophecies will be fulfilled in like manner.

5. The Holy Spirit will testify of Christ and glorify Christ (John 16:14; 15:26).

a. This is a primary function of the Spirit. Christ is the chosen of the Father to be given a name above every name, and it is the Spirit's job to glorify Him.

b. The Spirit of God came at Pentecost to perform this work, and He has performed it ever since. This is why the name of the lowly, rejected "Jesus of Nazareth" is a prominent name throughout the world. Millions of books have been written about Him in every major language and most minor ones. Even in Israel today, though most Jews steadfastly reject Jesus as the Christ, His name is everywhere stamped upon Israel's land and history. A large percentage of the rigorous two-year training program for Israeli guides is devoted to the life and journeys of Jesus of Nazareth, though He is still rejected as Israel's Messiah.

c. The testimony of the Spirit to the sinner's heart is the means of conversion. The Spirit testifies of Christ as Lord and Saviour, and the sinner must respond through repentance and faith. *Every* new birth conversion is a product of the Spirit's reproving, testimony work.

Christ's High Priestly Prayer (John 17)

This chapter is the completion of Christ's ministry between instigation of the Lord's Supper in the Upper Room and His prayers and arrest in Gethsemane.

At the end of John 16, Christ finished instructing the disciples in preparation for His death. Now He prays for them.

1. The Lord was in complete control at every moment of His "Passion week." His sinless character was on display during this most terrible trial. He was sinless in deed and attitude. Not for a moment was He flustered, frustrated, fearful, doubtful, angry, or vengeful.

2. Every word He spoke was pure (Psa. 12:6). He knew He was speaking Scripture that night. He knew His words would not fall to the ground, that though the disciples did not understand anything He was saying, the Spirit of God would bring those very words back to their remembrance and illuminate them and cause them to be written and preserved.

3. This chapter, together with John 1, gives Scripture's most intimate glimpse into the eternal relationship of God the Father and God the Son. This is holiest ground. No creature is worthy to look on these things, and the fact that God has revealed them to sinners is evidence of His great mercy and grace. In the last section we looked at some of the lessons about the Trinity from John 17.

4. This chapter is unfathomable. We can only touch the surface of its teaching but even the surface is glorious. "It is impossible to give an exposition of this great chapter. Blessed depths are here which we shall fathom when we are with Him" (*Gaebelein's Annotated Bible*).

a. Christ prays that the Father and Son will be mutually glorified in that hour (Joh. 17:1).

He is referring to the hour of His suffering and death. Christ was not walking toward destruction; He was walking toward glory! This was the hour of God's greatest glory. This hour was planned by the Triune God in His eternal counsels, and by this event, God showed the greatness of His holiness and love to the entire creation forever (Eph. 2:4-7). He is so holy that He required the death of His own Son for the redemption of fallen mankind, and He is so loving that He

gave His Son for that death. Men and devils thought they had Christ in their grasp; they thought that by their evil scheme and wicked collaboration they could snuff out His life and be rid of Him; but by their evil act they merely fulfilled God's plan for the redemption of the universe (Acts 2:23; 1 Co. 2:7-8).

b. Christ gives eternal life to those given to Him by the Father (Joh. 17:2).

The statements in verses 1-2 are connected. God is glorified in His saving power. God's salvation is His chief glory. It is the full display of His great moral character. In salvation we see God's omniscient wisdom, His omnipotent power, His holiness, His justice, His love, His compassion, His mercy, His kindness, His gentleness, His patience.

This does not describe "unconditional election," which would mean that God does not take into account man's response to the gospel. If the verse were isolated, it could mean that, but it cannot be isolated from the context of the rest of John's Gospel and the rest of Scripture. John plainly taught that salvation is a "whosoever *will*" business (Joh. 3:15, 16; 4:13; 11:26; 12:46; 13:20).

The election of God is like a door. On the outside is inscribed "whosoever will, let him come" (Re. 22:17). On the inside is inscribed, "chosen in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). On the outside is inscribed, "this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life" (Joh. 6:40). On the inside is inscribed, "... all that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (Joh. 6:37). Both inscriptions are true, though we are unable at this present time to fully reconcile them.

c. Christ has power over all flesh (Joh. 17:2).

As the Creator, He has power over every beast and every man. He demonstrated His power over the fish of the sea (Mt. 17:27; Joh. 21:6). His power over man is just as complete, though He has given man freedom of will. Christ has power over every individual who has ever lived, and every person is accountable to Christ. Repentance is to acknowledge God's authority over my life and be ready to submit to it. It is a "change of mind" about God's authority and God's law.

d. Eternal life is to know God (Joh. 17:3).

Salvation is a personal relationship with God in Christ. It is not a religion; it is not reformation; it is not a philosophy. It is a relationship. The apostle Paul said, "I know whom I have believed..." (2 Tim. 1:12). Christ twice warned of those who will be rejected because He does not know them (Mt. 7:23; 25:12).

Jesus again makes Himself equal to God. Salvation is to know God, and salvation is to know Jesus Christ. That statement would be blasphemy if Jesus were not God.

It is impossible to know God apart from knowing Jesus Christ. "Millions of people claim to know God but do not know Christ. They are victims of false religion. To claim to know God but to deny the deity of Christ is a fatal error" (John Phillips).

Salvation is described as eternal life. This is the teaching of eternal security. Christ paid the full price of redemption, and His gift to the believing sinner is eternal life (Ro. 6:23). This is not life that lasts as long as the sinner "holds out faithful." God holds the believer, and he cannot perish (Joh. 10:28-30). Those who come to Christ will in no wise be cast out (Joh. 6:37).

e. Christ tells the Father that He had finished the work (Joh. 17:4).

This is language pertaining to Christ's eternality. Though the work was not yet accomplished in the human timeframe, it was already accomplished in the eternal plan of God and was as certain as if Christ had already suffered. He is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Re. 13:8).

The work was given to the Son by the Father. Compare 1 Joh. 4:14.

f. Christ's constant objective was to glorify and obey the Father (Joh. 17:5). In everything the Son of man was in humble submission to God the Father. This is man as God intended when He made Adam, though He knew that the first Adam would not be this man.

g. The chief objective of the incarnation is God's glory. God is glorified by the revelation of His character in the redemption of the fallen world. This will redound to His eternal glory and praise.

h. Christ prays that the Father would glorify Him with the glory of His own self (Joh. 17:5).

Christ prays to the Father, "... glorify thou me with thine own self." This is what the Son longed for the most. In the entire prayer, it is the only thing that He asks for Himself. He wanted to go the Father. The relationship between the Son and the Father is the most intimate, compassionate relationship conceivable. In fact, it is beyond conceivable and never will be fully conceivable by man, because the love between the Father and Son is an eternal, infinite love.

i. Christ prays to be restored to the unveiled glory of the eternal Son of God, seated on the throne of the universe in heaven at the right hand of the Father (Joh. 17:5). He mentions this glory three times in the prayer (Joh. 17:5, 22, 24), and we looked at it in the previous chapter. Christ left the divine glory to come into this sin-cursed world. He took upon Himself the form of a servant to accomplish the work of redemption. Now He asks to return to His rightful place.

j. Christ speaks of His eternal relationship with the Father ("before the world was," Joh. 17:5).

He repeats this in verse 24, "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The Father-Son relationship is an eternal love affair in a pure and holy sense. It is from this amazing relationship that God's love flows toward His creatures. God loves as a Father.

k. The apostles were chosen by God the Father and given to the Son (Joh. 17:6).

This is not a statement about all of the Lord's disciples. Christ does not mention the women who had believed on Him, for example. The church is God's eternal plan, and the apostles as the human founders of the church are part of that plan. This is where "sovereign" election is seen. God's choice of men such as Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David is not based on their choice, though their submission to God's will was foreknown by God. This is the subject of Romans 9:11. It is not the election of sinners to personal salvation; it is the election of men such as Jacob to a certain place in God's eternal plans.

They had kept God's Word. This was not in the sense that they were perfectly obedient. In fact, they were unfaithful in a thousand ways. Only hours later Peter denied Christ. They kept God's Word in the sense that they continued in faith in Jesus as the Messiah. They did not turn away from Christ like the multitude in John 6:66-69, and they were not unbelieving hypocrites like Judas. This is made clear in John 17:7-8.

l. The Word of God is at the heart of Christ's prayer (Joh. 17:6, 8, 12, 14, 17, 19, 20).

"they have kept thy word" (Joh. 17:6)

"I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me" (Joh. 17:8)

"that the scripture might be fulfilled" (Joh. 17:12)

"I have given them thy word" (Joh. 17:14)

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (Joh. 17:17)

"that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (Joh. 17:19)

"them also which shall believe on me through their word" (Joh. 17:20)

(1) Christ exalted the Word of God throughout His ministry, from the beginning when He refuted the devil with it to the end when He quoted it on the cross.

(2) The Word of God is Scripture (Joh. 17:12). The Word of God was delivered to holy men of old who wrote the words of God under inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). It was canonized and preserved by the same Spirit. The Bible *is* the Word of God.

(3) The Word of God is composed of individual words (Joh. 17:8). The Bible is the Word of God, and it is composed of the words of God. Divine inspiration of Scripture is *verbal* rather than general.

(4) The Word of God is truth (Joh. 17:17, 19). There is no error, no impurity in God's Word. It is utterly truth; it is right in all matters; it is completely dependable. "Thy word *is* true *from* the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments *endureth* for ever" (Psa. 119:160).

(5) The Word of God sanctifies (Joh. 17:17). It sets the believer apart to God. The Bible is not instruction for the mind alone. It is holy, and it produces holiness. It is powerful and effectual. Rightly understood, it affects the mind, the heart, and the life. Immersion in God's Word is at the center of Christian sanctification, spiritual growth, and victory.

(6) The Word of God must be received ("they have received them," Joh. 17:8). Compare Acts 2:41; 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; 1 Co. 15:1; 2 Th. 2:10. This is what distinguished the Lord's disciples from the unbelieving nation Israel, and it is what distinguishes the true Christian from all other people.

(7) The reception of the Word of God is how it is preserved, humanly speaking. See 1 Th. 2:13. Each generation of believers receives God's Word and keeps it and passes it along to the next generation. This is why the Traditional Greek New Testament is called the Received Text. It is the text that was kept by the Greek Byzantines in the part of the world where it was first written by the apostles and prophets and was passed along to the

Protestant Reformation at which time it was printed and became the basis for the Protestant translations in all of the world's major languages.

m. Christ prayed for His disciples but not for the world (Joh. 17:9).

(1) Christ is the High Priest of His people and ever intercedes for them (Heb. 7:25). His great intercessory prayers have continued down through the centuries to protect and help His people in this alien world. His prayers are the unseen cause of the effectualness of the gospel and the continuation of true churches to the end of the age (Mt. 28:20).

(2) Christ does not pray for the world. While He died to make it possible for the world to be saved (John 3:16), He is not the High Priest and intercessor of the world. The unbeliever is not reconciled with God and does not have the promises of God. The unbeliever is without Christ, a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12).

n. Christ prayed for the Father to keep His people (Joh. 17:11-12, 15). Here we see the perfect security of the true believer in the almighty hands of God. Compare John 10:27-30.

o. Christ warned of the world's animosity toward His people (Joh. 17:14). This was true of the unbelieving Jewish nation (Joh. 16:2), and it is true for the whole world, because this world is at enmity with God and is under the devil's control. Christ's prophecy has been fulfilled in 2,000 years of persecution against Bible-believing Christians, which is further evidence that He is the Son of God.

p. The believer is not of the world (Joh. 17:15-16). The child of God is a citizen of heaven and a pilgrim in this present world. James warned that he who loves this world is the enemy of God, because the world is at enmity with God (Jam. 4:4; Ro. 8:7). The world system was devised by rebels who want to enjoy the things of God without submitting to God's authority. It began with Cain and his sons, who were murderers, boasters, and polygamists (Gen. 4:16-24).

q. Christ has sent His people into the world to preach the gospel and make disciples (Joh. 17:18). Compare Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8. Every believer is an ambassador for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). When we speak the gospel, we are speaking in Christ's stead.

r. Christ was sanctified in order to sanctify His people (Joh. 17:19).

Christ accomplished this on the cross, which is the basis of His high priestly work. Every aspect of sanctification, from justification to resurrection and eternal glory, is founded in Christ's atoning work on Calvary (Heb. 10:10; 2:10).

s. Christ prays for all believers (Joh. 17:20).

(1) This is Christ the High Priest interceding for His people. He is still praying (Ro. 8:34), and this is the guarantee of eternal salvation (Heb. 7:25).

(2) God's ordained method of salvation is faith in the word preached by believers. Every believer is an ambassador for Christ (2 Co. 5:20), and the world is required by God to believe the witness of His people (Lk. 10:16; 2 Co. 2:15-16).

(3) All spiritual blessings come by believing: forgiveness (Acts 10:43), justification (Acts 13:39), adoption (John 1:12), sanctification (Acts 26:18), spiritual light (Joh. 12:46), peace and joy (Ro. 15:13).

t. Christ prays for the oneness of believers (Joh. 17:21-23).

(1) This passage is misused by the ecumenical movement, which treats it as a command that believers must obey; but it is not a command, it is a prayer to the Father. And it *was* fulfilled and *is* fulfilled. It is not something believers must do; it is something God has already done.

- The unity spoken of here does not pertain to "Christianity" and "Christendom," but to the true church of Christ which is "without spot or wrinkle" (Eph. 5:27). Every believer is a part of Christ's body and is one with the Father and Son and Spirit (Joh. 17:22-23; 1 Co. 12:13).

- This is a supernatural unity that comes through salvation. It is new birth, family of God unity. It is not something man can do; it is something that God has done. It is a unity of true believers, and it is a unity in the truth (Joh. 17:17).

- Therefore, it is not an ecumenical unity, because ecumenical unity tries to create a man-made unity among Christians of all types and denominations, including Roman Catholic, irrespective of doctrinal purity and spiritual reality. I have attended several ecumenical conferences with media credentials, and I have asked many attendees, "When were you born again?" I have gotten answers such as, "I am not familiar with that term"; "I was born again when I was baptized"; "I was born again through a charismatic

experience"; "I think I was born again over a period of time"; "Born again isn't a Catholic term, is it?"; "Is that a trick question?"

(2) The true unity of believers witnesses to the world (Joh. 17:21). This has nothing to do with the witness of ecumenical unity, which is not a witness of truth but of mixture and confusion.

- The witness of John 17:21 is first of all the witness of true Christians. Unbelievers are impressed with the life of a genuine Christian.

- The witness of John 17:21, second, is the witness of a true Bible-believing assembly ("the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," 1 Tim. 3:15) that is obeying God's Word and is therefore an effectual witness for Christ in this dark world (Phil. 2:14-16).

u. Christ prays that believers will be with Him in glory (Joh. 17:24).

(1) The believer will be with Christ. This is true glory! Paul knew whom he had believed (2 Tim. 1:12). He wanted to "depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23). The Psalmist exclaimed, "... in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore" (Psa 16:11). David said he would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness (Psa. 84:10), but the born again believer will not be a doorkeeper; he will take his place as an adopted son, as a member of the very bride of Christ!

(2) The believer will see Christ in His glory. This is the privilege of the redeemed that Job spoke of (Job 19:26-27). To see Christ's glory does not refer only to visual sight but also to spiritual sight. "They will have a clear insight into his glorious undertaking, as it will be then accomplished; they will see into those springs of love from which flow all the streams of grace; they shall have an appropriating sight of Christ's glory" (Matthew Henry).

(3) The believer will share in Christ's glory. Compare Col. 3:4; 2 Th. 1:10.

v. The Lord finishes His prayer by addressing the Father as "righteous Father" (Joh. 17:25).

(1) The world hates God's righteousness and rebels against it, but it is God's righteousness that guarantees the foundation of His eternal kingdom. If He were not righteous and if He did not enforce righteousness, the universe

would continue in anarchy and chaos until it ended in destruction. It is unrighteousness that plunged this world into confusion.

(2) If God were not righteous, He would not be good, true, faithful, and dependable. Those are characteristics of righteousness rather than of unrighteousness. If He were not righteous, He would not be loving, for love is a characteristic of righteousness. The heart of God's righteous law is to love thy neighbor as thyself (Ro. 13:9-10; Gal. 5:14). The heart of unrighteousness is self-centeredness, which is not love.

w. Christ ends the prayer with a repetition of the preeminence and permanence of love (Joh. 17:26).

(1) God's love is infinite, and His eternal kingdom is a kingdom of love. The citizens of His kingdom will grow in love forever because of their intimate relationship with the God of love.

(2) The character of God is imparted by the knowledge of God. The declaration of God's name is the declaration of His character. Compare 2 Pet. 1:3. "That is, 'I have made known unto them thy nature, attributes, counsels, will and commands, and I will continue the manifestation of the same unto the end'" (Burkitt).

(3) The Father loves those who believe on Christ as He loves the Son (Joh. 17:26, 23). This is a most amazing and nearly incomprehensible truth. The Father loves the Son with an everlasting, infinite, divinely fervent love. That He would love His lowly, unworthy creatures, even after they are redeemed, with this same love is marvelous and humbling.

Matthew 26 Gethsemane

See Map 10 - *"Christ's Final Days."*

See the Powerpoint *"Christ's Passion Week."*

Jesus Prays in the Garden (Mt. 26:36-46)

1. The place was on the Mount of Olives. The name "Gethsemane" means olive mill, referring to a place where olives were pressed. "There our Lord Jesus began his passion; there it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and crush him, that fresh oil might flow to all believers from him, that we might partake of the root and fatness of that good Olive. There he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath, and trod it alone" (Matthew Henry).

See the PowerPoint presentation *"Olive and Olive Press"* .

2. He took Peter, James, and John (Mt. 26:37). They had witnessed His glorification (Mt. 17:1-2); now they will witness His sufferings. If I am not chosen for something, my business is to leave the matter with God and surrender to His will.

3. What was "the cup" of verse 39?

a. The cup was Christ's atoning sufferings (Joh. 18:11). It was not the pain itself that Christ was drawing back fRo. The most agonizing part of the cup for the Son of God was the thought of becoming sin and being separated from the Father. See Mt. 27:46; 2 Co. 5:21. Jesus had never sinned and had been one with the Father from all eternity (John 1:1-2).

b. Some think Jesus was praying not to die there under the devil's attack before His time. Compare Mt. 26:38 and Lk. 22:32. H.L. Wilmington says, "From all this it becomes evident that the devil made an all-out effort to murder the Saviour in the garden in order to prevent his blood being shed a few hours later on the cross."

c. Whatever it was, Jesus got the victory over it and went forward as the Captain of our souls to purchase our salvation. If Jesus did not drink the cup, the world could not be saved. He came to earth at the bidding of the Father to drink that cup (1 Joh. 4:14).

4. Some lessons about prayer

a. Prayer is spiritual warfare, and it is not always easy. Compare Luke 22:44.

b. Prayer often requires privacy (Mt. 26:36).

c. Prayer is asking something of the Father.

d. Prayer requires surrender to the Father's will (Mt. 26:39). This is the way that Paul prayed (2 Co. 12:8-9). Contrast some charismatics today who think they can demand or claim things from God, such as healing and prosperity.

e. In times of greater temptation, prayer is more urgently needed (Mt. 26:41). The devil is like a roaring lion, who seeks to devour those who are struggling and weak (1 Pet. 5:8).

f. Weariness and sleepiness is an enemy of prayer (Mt. 26:40, 43).

g. Prayer requires persistence. Jesus prayed the same thing three times, and in His persistence He got the victory over the devil's temptation.

h. It is also good to seek the help of others in prayer (Mt. 26:40).

i. Earnest prayer brings strength to the soul (Lk. 22:43). Compare Psa. 138:3.

5. Jesus was kind and patient with His disciples even in the midst of His terrible trial (Mt. 26:45; Psa. 78:38-39), though He had a gentle rebuke for their carelessness (Mt. 26:40) and exhorted them to watch and pray (Mt. 26:41).

6. Everything in Jesus' life was planned by God and under God's control. He could not die until it was "the hour" (Mt. 26:45). In every way He was fulfilling prophecy.

Christ's arrest (Mt. 26:47-56)

1. Jesus called the arresting crowd "sinners" (Mt. 26:45). This shows the error of Robert Schuller of the Crystal Cathedral in California, who claims that Jesus never called men sinners because that would hurt their "self-esteem"! Jesus elsewhere called men "evil" (Mt. 7:11; 12:34).

2. The arresting crowd was sent from the chief priests and elders (Mt. 26:47). They had planned this since the beginning of Christ's ministry (Mt. 12:14).

3. Judas betrayed Jesus with a hypocritical kiss, but Jesus addressed him as a "friend" (Mt. 26:48-50). Judas' kiss was a lie, but Jesus' words were the truth. Jesus

loved Judas and would have saved him, but he was an unrepentant and unbelieving hypocrite.

4. Peter fought, but Jesus stopped him (Mt. 26:51-52; compare Joh. 18:10). This might have made Peter angry and put him even deeper into a sullen, backslidden state. Christ had rebuked Peter in Matthew 16:23 and had recently warned him that he would deny Him (Mt. 26:34).

5. Jesus healed the man's ear (Lk. 22:51).

6. Though it was a great multitude, they could not have taken Jesus if He had resisted (Mt. 26:53). A "legion" was a division of the Roman army, which was about 6,000 footmen and 300 horsemen. Thus 12 legions would have been about 78,000, and just one angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in the Old Testament (2 Kings 19:35).

7. Jesus rebuked His enemies with the truth (Mt. 26:55). He did not strive with or rail against evil men, but He ever spoke the truth to them. We are taught to do the same thing (2 Tim. 2:24-26). Christ was also appealing to the conscience of those who would listen to Him. He was always trying to reach men's hearts and save them.

8. All of this was in fulfillment of prophecy (Mt. 26:56). See Psa. 41:9; Zec. 13:7.

Matthew 26-27 Christ's Trial and Crucifixion

See Map 10 - *"Christ's Final Days."*

See the Powerpoint *"Christ's Passion Week."*

Jesus appears before Caiaphas the High Priest (Mt. 26:57-68).

Jesus was first brought to Annas, Caiaphas' father-in-law, who sent Him bound to Caiaphas (John 18:13, 24). Though put out of the high priesthood by the Roman authorities in AD 15, Annas continued to wield power through his sons. Five of his sons and one of his sons-in-law were high priests. This is why Jesus was brought before Annas in John 18, even though it was Annas' son-in-law Caiaphas who was the official high priest. It was Annas' fifth son, also named Annas, who persecuted the apostles in Jerusalem and was pleased when James was stoned to death (Acts 4:6; 12:1-3).

1. The trial was a mockery of justice from the beginning (Mt. 26:59-61). Compare Isaiah 53:8. The law was not followed, not the Jewish law nor the Roman law.

a. The witnesses were false (Mt. 26:59-60). Compare what these witnesses said with what Jesus actually said:

<u>The false witnesses' version</u>: "This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days."

<u>What Jesus really said</u>, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). He was referring, of course, to His death and resurrection (Joh. 2:21).

b. The false witnesses were not punished. According to the Mosaic Law, if a person brought false witness against someone in an attempt to do him harm, he must be punished with the same punishment (Deu. 19:15-21).

c. Caiaphas tore his clothes (Mt. 26:65), which was contrary to the law of Moses (Lev. 21:10; 10:6). "No high priest was ever to rend his garments. When Caiaphas in his excitement and indignation rent his clothes, the priesthood passed away from the house of Aaron. And with it went the entire legal

economy which was superseded by the marvelous dispensation of the grace of God" (Ironside, *Hebrews and Titus*).

d. Christ's judge repeatedly declared Him just, yet he ordered Him to be beaten and crucified contrary to Roman law (Mt. 27:24-26). Pilate stated this four times. See Joh. 18:38; 19:4, 6.

2. Christ's silence was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7. Compare Mt. 27:12-14; Mk. 14:61; 15:5; Joh. 19:9.

3. The spitting and smiting were a fulfillment of Isaiah 50:6 and Lam. 3:30.

4. Jesus testified that He is the Messiah prophesied in Daniel and Psalms (Mt. 26:64). Compare Daniel 7:13; Psalm 110:1.

Peter denies his Lord (Mt. 26:69-75).

The Bible contains a lot of information about this and repeats it in all of the Gospels.

1. What set the stage for the denial?

Every spiritual fall and every backsliding is preceded by many things. Nothing like this happens all at once.

a. He was perhaps offended at Jesus for being reproved (Mt. 16:23; 26:51-52).

b. He was boastful and self-confident (Mat 26:33).

c. He was not prayerful and spiritually alert (Mt. 26:40-41).

d. He tried to fight spiritual battles in the power of the flesh (Mt. 26:51-52).

e. He was fellowshipping with the Lord's enemies (Mt. 26:58). There were two steps that he took: First, he stood and warmed himself with them (Joh. 18:18). Next, he sat down among them (Lk. 22:55). Young people take these steps when they pursue worldly education. They think that they won't be harmed by the evil communications, but it never fails that they after they befriend the world that they are negatively influenced by those close associations.

2. Peter's three denials (Mt. 26:69-74).

a. Big, bold Peter was put to shame before women (Mt. 26:69, 71).

b. Peter cursed and swore (Mt. 26:74). The flesh is powerful, and if a believer does not walk in the Spirit, he can commit any sort of sin (Gal. 5:16-23).

3. Peter repented, weeping bitterly (Mt. 26:75). Jesus had turned and looked upon him (L. 22:61). This shows the difference between a true believer and a false one. When Jesus looked upon Peter, he repented of his sin and wept bitterly because of what he had done. But when Jesus looked upon Judas at the Last Supper and again in the garden, the hypocrite was not moved and proceeded with his wicked plan.

Judas commits suicide (Mt. 27:3-10).

1. Judas' repentance was not repentance for salvation but was remorse for the sins and mistakes he has made and the way he has ruined his life.

a. False repentance looks at oneself (he "repented himself" Mt. 27:3), whereas true repentance looks to God, turns to God (Acts 20:21; Lk. 15:18).

b. False repentance is only to have sorrow that something bad has happened to me; whereas true repentance is to have sorrow for sinning against God (2 Co. 7:9-11).

c. False repentance leads to hopelessness; whereas true repentance leads to faith in Christ and eternal hope.

2. Judas testified of Christ's innocence. (Mt. 27:4). This is the first of six such testimonies during Christ's trial and crucifixion.

3. Lessons about the Jewish priests and elders:

a. Here again we see that the Jewish leaders did not care about the truth (Mt. 27:4b).

b. The Jewish leaders also revealed their amazing hypocrisy again by claiming to care about the law in regard to the 30 pieces of silver (Mt. 27:6), even when they had rejected and condemned the very Lawgiver.

c. They piously tried to cover up their evil deeds with social works (Mt. 27:7). Most people in the world falsely believe that good deeds will cover their sins.

4. Why does verse 9 say Jeremiah spoke that prophecy, when it appears that it is from Zechariah (11:12-13)?

a. Zechariah was probably quoting from a prophecy of Jeremiah that was not written in the Scripture. Compare Zec. 7:7.

b. Since Jeremiah was the first book of the prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures, perhaps Matthew is citing Jeremiah as the author of all as is often done with the

Psalms. The Hebrew Scriptures were divided into three categories: The Law (first five books), the Psalms (all of the poetical books), and the Prophets.

5. Is there a contradiction between Mt. 27:5 and Acts 1:18?

a. There are two apparent contradictions between the accounts of Judas' death in Matthew and Acts.

(1) There is the seeming difference in the cause of death. Matthew says he hanged himself, whereas Acts says he fell and burst asunder in the midst of the field.

(2) There is the seeming difference in the way he handled the money. Matthew says he threw the money back to the Jewish leaders, whereas Acts says he purchased the field.

b. Answer: Matthew tells us part of what happened, and Acts tells us the rest.

(1) Judas hanged himself on some high tree, and "then by the rope or the branch of the tree breaking, he fell down and was dashed to pieces" (*Bible Handbook*).

(2) "Acts 1:18 says he purchased a field, which means no more than that he was the cause of a field being purchased, and this would agree with the chief priests buying the potter's field (Matthew 27:6-8) and with Zechariah 11:12-13. He did it as it were by proxy, the priests did it for him with his money" (*Bible Handbook*).

Christ appears before Pontius Pilate the first time (Mt. 27:1-2; Luke 23:1-7).

1. The Jewish leaders sent Jesus to Pilate because they did not have the authority to put Him to death under Roman law (Joh. 18:31).

a. Pontius Pilate governed Judea for ten years under the Roman emperor Tiberius Caesar, from AD 26 to 36. In 1961, a limestone block was found at Caesarea Maritima during reconstruction of the theater which proves that Pilate was the governor of Judea as the Bible says. Written in Latin, the inscription reads "Pontius Pilatus prefect of Judea erected the Tiberium to the august gods." This agrees with Luke's statement that Pilate ruled during the lifetime of

Tiberius (Luke 3:1). The Pilate Stone is housed in the Israel Museum, while a copy is on display at Caesarea.

b. Pilate was a worshiper of the Imperial Cult. The Tiberium that Pilate erected in Caesarea was a temple devoted to Caesar worship. Though he knew that Jesus was innocent, Pilate crucified him because he feared and honored Caesar more than God. In contrast, many believers were put to death because they refused to worship the Caesars during the Roman festivals.

c. Pilate was a cruel man who treated the Jews with brutality. He had killed Jews in Galilee and mingled their blood with their sacrifices (Lk. 13:1). Josephus reported that Pilate confiscated treasure from the Temple to build an aqueduct into Jerusalem, and when the Jews protested, he had them beaten by the soldiers. "A crowd came together and clamored against him; but he had caused soldiers dressed as civilians to mingle with the multitude, and at a given signal they fell upon the rioters and beat them so severely with staves that the riot was quelled."

2. The charges brought by the Jewish leaders were false (Lk. 23:2).

a. Jesus was not perverting the nation but was its lawful Lord and Saviour.

b. Jesus did not teach that men should not give tribute to Caesar; He taught just the opposite (Mt. 22:21).

c. Jesus was a King, but He was not attempting to set up an earthly kingdom at that time.

3. Pilate testified publicly that Jesus had done no wrong (Lk. 23:4).

a. This is the second testimony to Jesus' innocence in this chapter. The first was Judas' testimony in Matthew 27:4).

b. Thus, when Pilate turned Jesus over to be crucified, it was a complete miscarriage of justice.

c. Yet Jesus had to die, for our sins to be forgiven.

4. Pilate tried to shift responsibility for Jesus' case by sending Him to Herod (Lk. 23:7).

Christ appears before Herod (Lk. 23:8-12).

1. This is the Herod (the son of Herod the Great) who had put John the Baptist to death (Mk. 6:14).

2. Jesus did not say anything to Herod, because Herod was only wanting to see a miracle (Lk. 23:8-9).

3. It was first at Herod's that Jesus was arrayed in a robe and mocked (Lk. 23:11). Pilate's soldiers did the same thing (Mt. 27:27-31).

4. Pilate and Herod were united in their rejection of Christ (Lk. 23:12). A man's friends say a lot about what he really loves and believes (Amos 3:3).

Christ appears before Pontius Pilate the second time (Mt. 27:11-25).

1. Pilate had no excuse for condemning Jesus.

   a. He understood that the Jewish leaders had delivered Jesus because they were envious of Him (Mt. 27:18). The Jews had a bad reputation before the Gentiles. They were supposed to be a light in a dark world, but instead they were corrupt.

   b. Pilate's wife warned him not to convict Jesus (Mt. 27:19). This is the third testimony to Christ's innocence in this chapter. Pilate's final two testimonies of Christ's innocence (Jn. 19:4, 6) are the fourth and fifth such testimonies during Christ's trial and crucifixion.

2. Pilate attempted to go around the Jewish leaders by appealing to the people, thinking that they would chose anyone over Barabbas; but the people demanded that he release Barabbas instead (Mt. 27:15-18, 20-21).

   a. Barabbas was guilty of three terrible crimes:

      (1) Sedition (treason) (Lk. 23:19)

      (2) Murder (Lk. 23:19)

      (3) Theft (Joh. 18:40). Murder and theft often accompany treason and rebellion.

   b. It was the Jewish leaders who persuaded the people (Mt. 27:20).

      (1) Religious leaders have the greater accountability, because they teach the people.

(2) But the people are also accountable to know and follow the truth. We must never give our leaders unquestioning loyalty, as the Jews did to theirs. We must ever be like the Bereans, who carefully tested things by the Word of God (Acts 17:11).

(3) We see the fickleness of man and how easily he is led to sin. Only a few days earlier a multitude had welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem as a great prophet (Mt. 21:9-11).

3. Pilate tried to wash his hands of the matter (Mt. 27:24).

a. There can be no neutral ground toward Jesus (Mt. 12:30). Every man will give account to God in regard to his relationship to Jesus. There will be no acceptable excuse for rejecting Him.

b. Pilate was the only person there who had the authority to crucify Jesus, and the Bible says Pilate was guilty of Jesus' death (Acts 4:27).

c. He condemned Jesus solely because of politics, because of the cowardly fear of man and so as not to lose his position of authority (see John 19:12-13; Mk. 15:15).

d. In the end, he still lost his position and died in poverty and disgrace.

(1) Having exercised great cruelties against the Samaritans, they complained to Vitellius, governor of Syria, who sent Marcellus, one of Pilate's friends, to superintend Judea, and ordered Pilate to Rome, to give an account of his conduct to Tiberius Caesar.

(2) The emperor died before Pilate arrived; but according to ancient tradition, Pilate was banished to Vienne in Dauphiny, where he was reduced to such extremity that he killed himself with his own sword two years later (*Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*).

4. The Jewish people said that Jesus' blood would be upon them and upon their children (Mt. 27:25). This is exactly what happened. Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD and the Jews were scattered to the ends of the earth and have suffered terribly ever since.

5. Pilate's soldiers beat Christ and mocked Him (Mt. 27:27-31).

Christ's Crucifixion (Mt. 27:31-56)

1. The way to the crucifixion (Mt. 27:32; Luke 23:26-31)

   a. Jesus first began to carry the cross, then Simon was forced to carry it for Him. Compare Mt. 27:32 with Mk. 15:21. Simon was the father of two of the believers (Mark 15:21), Alexander and Rufus. This Rufus is possibly the same as the one mentioned by Paul in Rom. 16:13.

   b. Jesus gives a prophecy to the women of Jerusalem (Lk. 23:27-31).

      The prophecy has two parts: *The first part of the prophecy* (Lk. 23:28-29) describes the judgment that came upon Jerusalem in AD 70 when Titus, the Roman general, conquered the city. *The second part of the prophecy* looks ahead to the Tribulation period. Compare Lk. 23:30 and Rev. 6:16.

   c. According to the Roman Catholic Church, Jesus' mother Mary met Him along the way, but the Bible says nothing about it. It is another of Rome's many extra-biblical traditions.

2. The place of the crucifixion

   a. It was called "Golgotha" (Mt. 27:33). It is Hebrew (Jn. 19:17) and means "the place of a skull."

   b. It was also called "Calvary" (Lk. 23:33), which is Greek for "skull."

   For a description of this place and its location see the PowerPoint *"Christ's Passion Week."*

3. The time of the crucifixion (Mk. 15:25). The Roman third hour was about 9 a.m.

4. The prophecies of the crucifixion

   a. The date of the two greatest prophecies:

      (1) Isaiah 53 was written about 710 years before Christ.

      (2) Psalm 22 was written more than 1,000 years before Christ.

   b. The details of the prophecies:

      (1) The beating (Mt. 27:26) -- Isa. 50:6

      (2) The mocking (Mt. 27:31) -- Isa. 53:3

(3) The gall and vinegar (Mt. 27:34) -- Psa. 69:2. This was a narcotic mixture that Christ refused because He would drink the full cup of suffering for man's sin.

(4) The crucifixion (Mt. 27:35) -- Psa. 22:16

(5) Casting lots for his garments (Mt. 27:35) -- Psa. 22:18

(6) Watching him (Mt. 27:36) -- Psa. 22:17

(7) Crucified with transgressors (Mt. 27:38) -- Isa. 53:12

(8) Reviling him (Mt. 27:39) -- Psa. 22:13

(9) Wagging the head at him (Mt. 27:39) -- Psa. 22:7

(10) The words of Christ's enemies (Mt. 27:43) -- Psa. 22:8

(11) The words of Christ (Mt. 27:46) -- Psa. 22:1

(12) "Behold the man" (Jn. 19:5) -- Zec. 6:12

(13) No bone broken (Jn. 19:31-36) -- Psa. 22:17; 34:20; Ex. 12:46; Nu. 9:12

(14) The piercing of His side (Jn. 19:37) -- Zec. 12:10

5. The thieves that were crucified with him (Mt. 27:38, 44)

a. One was on either side of Christ.

b. They both mocked Him at first (Mt. 27:44).

c. One of the thieves repented and received Jesus as Lord (Lk. 23:39-43). This teaches us that we should be patient because sometimes the most wicked and stubborn sinner repents. It also teaches us that it is possible to be saved on one's "deathbed."

(1) He confessed his sin (Lk. 23:41). This was evidence of a great change in his heart. Most criminals justify themselves and refuse to confess their crimes.

(2) He confessed that Jesus was sinless (Lk. 23:41). This is the sixth testimony that Christ was innocent, beginning with Judas' testimony.

(3) He confessed Jesus as Lord (Lk. 23:42). Romans 10:9 says salvation requires confessing with thy mouth "the Lord Jesus."

(4) He believed that Jesus is the Christ who will establish the promised kingdom (Lk. 23:42).

d. Jesus promised him that he would be with him in paradise that very day (Lk. 23:43). Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventists, who teach the heresy of soul sleep, try to change this verse by moving the comma from after "thee" to after "To day." No reputable Bible translation follows this pattern.

6. The darkness for three hours (Mt. 27:45).

a. The sixth hour to the ninth hour was from about 12 noon to 3 p.m.

b. This was the darkest hour of man's history. The sinless Son of God was bearing the sins of all mankind before the holy Father. It was at this time that He was made sin for us (2 Co. 5:21). "During the three hours that this darkness continued, we do not find that he said one word, but passed this time in a silent retirement into his own soul, which was now in agony, wrestling with the powers of darkness, and taking in the impressions of his Father's displeasure, not against himself, but the sin of man, which he was now making his soul an offering for. Never were there three such hours since the day that God created man upon the earth, never such a dark and awful scene; the crisis of that great affair of man's redemption and salvation" (Matthew Henry).

c. The ninth hour (3 p.m.) was when the Passover lamb was killed. Christ was the true lamb of God who fulfilled all of the Old Testament sacrifices.

7. Jesus dismissed His spirit when salvation was finished (Mt. 27:50).

a. No other man has power over his spirit (Ecc. 8:8), but the Son of God determined the time of His death.

b. He said two things at the end.

(1) He cried, "It is finished" (Joh. 19:30). The atonement, which was planned by the Triune God in eternity, was finished at that moment.

(2) He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Lk. 23:46). He loved the Father and trusted the Father unto the end. The work of atonement was an act fulfilled between the Father and Son.

c. Did Jesus suffer in hell?

(1) Christ did not suffer in hell for our sins. He finished that on the cross.

(2) He went to hell to make an announcement to rebel angels (1 Pe. 3:20; 2 Pe. 2:4). The announcement was probably His victory over sin and Satan. Hebrews 2:14 says that Christ destroyed the devil through His atonement, meaning that he defeated him and destroyed the power of his kingdom.

8. The veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom (Mt. 27:51).

a. This was the veil that divided the first compartment of the temple from the holy of holies (Ex. 26:31-35; 40:3). The one in the temple was very thick and strong, being made of linen and wool thread that was doubled multiple times. It was 20 cubits or 30 feet tall (1 Ki. 6:20). "R. Simeon ben Gamaliel said ... the thickness of the veil is an hand's breadth, and it is woven of seventy-two threads, and every thread has twenty-four threads in it" (John Gill).

The course *Old Testament History and Geography* has artwork of the Tabernacle showing the holy place and the holy of holies with the dividing veil.

b. The tearing signified two things:

(1) *The tearing signified that God accepted Christ's sacrifice and the way to God is now open for sinners through repentance and faith in Christ*. See Hebrews 10:19-22. "This rending of the veil was, on the part of God, the glorious 'AMEN' which the Father gave to the life of Christ" (*Biblical Illustrator*). Under the law of Moses, no one could enter the holy of holies except the high priest once per year on the day of atonement (Heb. 9:6-8). This pointed to Christ's atonement. He is the High Priest who has made the acceptable atonement by the offering of Himself on Calvary. In Christ, the way to God is open. The believer abides in God and enters into God's presence whenever he wants (John 10:9; Heb. 4:16).

(2) *The tearing signified that the mysteries of God are open through Christ* (2 Co. 3:14-16). The objects in the holy of holies (the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat, and the cherubim), signifying the presence of God and the deepest mysteries of God, sat in darkness throughout the year. The holy place was lit by the seven-branched menorah, but no light entered the holy of holies until the curtain was rent.

c. When the curtain was rent, the high priest, Caiaphas, was in the temple offering up the evening incense, and the priests were offering the evening sacrifice (Ex. 29:38-39; 30:7-8). Scripture does not tell us how he and the other Jewish leaders explained this irrefutable supernatural sign, but we know that

they ignored it and persisted in their rejection of Jesus as the Christ. No miracle will convince those who have hardened their hearts in willful unbelief.

9. The resurrection of some saints (Mt. 27:52-53).

a. This passage describes a limited resurrection in Israel which occurred *after* Christ rose from the dead. Who were those who were raised in this limited resurrection, and what was its purpose? The following two views, in our estimation, offer the most probable answer to these questions:

(1) It is possible that these were persons who had lived contemporary with Christ and who had recently died. Barnes makes this comment: "It is probable that they were persons who had recently died, and they appear to have been known in Jerusalem; at least, had the ancient saints risen, they would not have been known, and would not so soon have been credited as those who had recently died. It is not improbable to suppose that it was, amid the other wonders attending the death of Jesus, to convince the Jews that he was the Messiah [see verse 54]. Perhaps some who had been his open friends were raised up now as an attestation that he in whom they had believed was the Christ."

(2) It is possible that these were prophets and martyrs who in Old Testament times had sealed the truths of God with their blood, and by this resurrection they were dignified and distinguished. Perhaps they were the very ones whose tombs were garnished by the Pharisees (Mt. 23:29).

b. Though there are many questions we could ask which God leaves unanswered (Deu. 29:29), we do know that He has put this passage in Scripture to enlighten and encourage us. Following are a couple of the lessons:

(1) This limited resurrection is evidence that the Lord Jesus Christ has gained complete victory over death and the grave (Eph. 4:8-10; Heb. 2:14-15). This limited resurrection is like an earnest or promise of the resurrection which will occur at Christ's coming (1 Co. 15).

(2) This was a further confirmation of Christ's resurrection. It is another of those "many infallible proofs" upon which our faith is so solidly established (Acts 1:3).

10. The testimony of the centurion and those with him (Mt. 27:54). This is the seventh such testimony during Christ's trial and crucifixion that He was innocent.

11. The faithful women disciples (Mt. 27:55-56)

a. The Bible mentions "many" women who were at the crucifixion, but only one of the male disciples, which was John (Joh. 19:26).

b. Women are an important part of the service of Christ. Though they have some limitations and there are some restrictions upon their work, they should not be despised by the churches. The Bible often mentions women in an honorable manner.

(1) It was a woman who brought Jesus into the world.

(2) Many women assisted Jesus during His ministry (Lk. 8:2-3).

(3) It was a woman who anointed Jesus for His burial prior to His death (Mt. 26:6-13).

(4) It was mostly women who stood at the cross (Mt. 27:55-56).

(5) It was women who observed Jesus' burial and who came to anoint Jesus after He was dead (Lk. 23:55-56).

(6) It was women who first came to the empty tomb and first believed the resurrection (Mt. 28:1-6).

(7) It was women who first reported the resurrection to the apostles (Mt. 28:7-8).

(8) Women were waiting with the men in the upper room for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14).

(9) Many of the first Christians were women (Acts 17:4, 12), such as Lydia the first convert of Philippi (Acts 16:14).

(10) Women such as Lois and Eunice trained up young men for the Lord (2 Tim. 1:5).

(11) Women such as Phebe were messengers of the churches (Ro. 16:1-2).

(12) Women such as Priscilla helped men plant churches (Ro. 16:3-5).

c. Jesus' mother Mary was there, and her heart was pierced (Lk. 2:34-35). But this does not mean that she had any part in man's salvation. The Roman Catholic Church exalts Mary far above that which we find in the Bible. At the Saint Mary Major Church in Rome, there is a large image of a cross with Jesus

on one side and Mary on the other! On the ceiling of the church is a painting of Mary being crowned by Jesus and sitting together with Him in His throne.

Christ's Burial (Mt. 27:57-66)

1. This was in fulfillment of Scripture (Isaiah 53:9).

2. Joseph of Arimathaea was assisted by Nicodemus (Joh. 19:38-40). This was the ruler who came to Jesus by night in John 3 and heard Jesus say, "Ye must be born again." At that time, he wasn't a believer, but it is apparent that he believed in Jesus as the Christ sometime after that.

3. The Jewish leaders tried to stop the resurrection (Mt. 27:62-66)! Their very actions actually authenticated the resurrection. It was now impossible for the disciples to steal Jesus' body.

On What Day of the Week Did Jesus Die?

The traditional position is that Jesus died on Friday. It is called "Good Friday" by Roman Catholics and Protestants. This is not possible, because Jesus said He would be in the grave three days and three nights and rise the third day (Mt. 12:40). If He died on Friday, it would only have been a part of two days and two nights. If He died on Friday and rose early Sunday morning, He would have risen on the second day at best.

It seems that there are two possibilities as to what day Jesus died: Wednesday or Thursday.

1. Jesus could have died on Thursday. He had prophesied that He would rise on the third day (Mt. 16:21), which might mean that he didn't spend a full three days in the grave. If He died on Thursday, Sunday would have been the third day. If He died on Thursday, the following would have been the order of events:

a. Jesus was crucified on the passover. He died at about 4 p.m. in the afternoon and the Jewish day began at dusk. (The Jewish day begins at sunset and closed at sunset.)

b. The day after the passover was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread and that first day was a special sabbath day of rest. Compare John 19:31 and Lev. 23:5-7. If Christ died on Thursday, He had been in the grave for one day at Friday sunset.

c. The next day was the normal weekly sabbath, Saturday. If He died on Thursday, He would have had been in the grave for two days on Saturday sunset.

d. Jesus rose early on the third day, on Sunday morning. Mt. 28:1 uses the term "sabbath" from the Greek *sabbaton*, which can be either singular or plural (Strong). In this case, it could refer to the plural sabbaths that had just transpired.

This would have been a little over two days and three nights.

2. Jesus could have died on Wednesday. This is the position of William Pettingill (author of *Bible Questions Answered*) and James Crumpton (director of the Maranatha Baptist Mission in Natchez, Mississippi). They emphasize the statement of Mt. 12:40, which says Jesus would be three *days* and three *nights* in the heart of the earth. If Jesus died on Wednesday, the following would have been the order of events:

a. Jesus was crucified on Wednesday in the late afternoon and was placed in the tomb at about the beginning of the Jewish day.

b. The next day was the special high sabbath. That was Thursday. At sunset, Jesus had been in the grave for one day.

c. The next day was Friday. At sunset, Jesus had been in the grave for two days.

d. The next day was Saturday the regular sabbath. At sunset, Jesus had been in the grave for three full days and nights.

e. Jesus rose sometime after midnight, early on the third day, on Sunday morning.

Matthew 28 Christ's Resurrection

1. The *events* of the resurrection day.

The following is the possible order of the events, though the exact order of appearances is not easy to discover:

a. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome start for the sepulchre, followed by other women bearing spices. The three find the stone rolled away and an angel instructs them that Jesus is risen and tells them to go to tell the disciples (Mt. 28:1-8; Lk. 24:1-10; Joh. 20:1-2). (Salome is called Joanna in Lk. 24:10).

b. Jesus appears to the the women as they go to tell the disciples (Mt. 28:9-10).

c. Peter and John, warned by Mary Magdalene, arrive, look into the tomb, and go away Joh. 20:3-10). John believes.

d. Mary Magdalene returns weeping, sees the two angels and then Jesus (Joh. 20:10-18), and goes as He bade her to tell the disciples.

e. Christ appears to Peter, probably in the afternoon (Lk. 24:34; 1 Co. 15:5).

f. Christ appears to the Emmaus disciples toward evening (Lk. 24:13-31).

g. Christ appears to the apostles, except Thomas (Lk. 24:36-43; Joh. 20:19-24).

2. The miracles associated with Christ's resurrection appearances

a. He changed His appearance (Joh. 20:14).

b. He veiled the eyes of men so that they could not recognize Him (Lk. 24:15-16).

c. He vanished out of sight (Lk. 24:31).

d. He appeared in rooms with closed doors (Joh. 20:19, 26).

e. He filled the disciples' nets with fish (Joh. 21:5-6).

3. The necessity of Christ's resurrection

The Bible and Christianity rise or fall on Christ's resurrection!

a. The Bible's accounts of Jesus claim to be historical, eyewitness accounts (Luke 1:1-4; 2 Peter 1:15-16; 1 John 1:3). If the accounts are not historically accurate, then they can rightly be rejected.

b. Christ staked His authority on the resurrection (Matthew 16:21; 17:9, 22-23; 20:18-19; 26:32; Luke 9:22-27; John 2:18-22).

c. Paul said that the Christian faith depends on Christ's resurrection (1 Co. 15:14-17).

d. Salvation requires believing the resurrection (Ro. 10:9)

4. The evidence of Christ's resurrection

"I know pretty well what evidence is; and I tell you, such evidence as that for the resurrection has never been broken down yet" (Lord Lyndhurst or John Singleton Copley, Attorney General of Great Britain, Lord Chancellor of England, High Steward of the University of Cambridge, original source probably from Theodore Martin, *A Life of Lord Lyndhurst*).

a. The character of the Gospel accounts

The Gospel accounts themselves give every evidence that they were written by eyewitnesses who believed what they wrote and who were speaking the truth without embellishment and myth-making.

(1) Consider the details of the accounts. "John's Gospel is characterized throughout by the personal touch; it has all the marks of the evidence not only of an eyewitness, but of a careful observer ... The running of the disciples, the order of their arrival at the sepulchre and their entry, the fact that John first stooped down and looking through the low doorway saw the linen clothes lying, while Peter, more bold, was the first to enter ... the description of the position of the linen clothes and the napkin ... this can surely be nothing else than the description of one who actually saw, upon whose memory the scene is still impressed, to whom the sight of the empty grave and the relinquished grave-clothes was a critical point in faith and life" (E. Day, *On the Evidence of the Resurrection*, pp. 16-17).

(2) Consider the candor of the accounts. When someone invents a religion, he glorifies its leaders, but the Gospels paint the founders of Christianity as very weak (e.g., Peter having to be rebuked by Christ as Satan--Mt. 16:23;

Peter denying Christ thrice; the disciples fleeing and hiding; Thomas and others doubting Christ even after He appears to them).

(3) Further, if men had made up the accounts of Christ's resurrection, they would *not* have said that the women were the first to believe. In that day women had no authority in the eyes of society. They could not even testify in a court of law in those days, except in rare occasions (J.P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City*, p. 168). The account of the women believing first is not something that would have been written unless it actually happened and the writers were committed wholeheartedly to recording the truth and nothing but the truth. This striking candor is powerful evidence that the Gospels are true, unvarnished accounts.

b. The empty tomb

(1) The evidence for the empty tomb

First, the Jewish leaders had to invent the lie that the disciples had stolen His body (Mt. 28:11-15). If Jesus' body was located anywhere, they would have searched it out and produced it.

Second, just weeks after the crucifixion, only a stone's throw from the empty tomb itself, Peter publicly proclaimed the resurrection and 3,000 believed, followed a little later by "a great company of priests" and "a great number" more (Acts 2:37-42; 6:7; 11:21). If anyone could have produced the body or come up with a reasonable account for it being missing, they would have!

(2) The vain theories that have been proposed to account for the empty tomb

"The field of biblical criticism resembles a vast graveyard filled with the skeletons of discarded theories devised by highly imaginative skeptics. ... One might think that so many repeated failures ... would lead the opposition to abandon their efforts, but not so. They continue unabated, and men are still wracking their brains, working their imaginations overtime, and parading a vast amount of erudition and ingenuity in their, to us, futile attempts to destroy the impregnable rock of historical evidence on which the Christian faith in the resurrection stands proud and unshaken" (John Lilly).

<u>Jesus swooned and recovered in the cool of the tomb.</u>

This is refuted by the fact that the professional soldiers had ascertained that he was dead (John 19:31-34).

Further, how could a near-dead man remove the heavy stone and convince his followers that he had risen from the dead? Consider what Christ endured: severe beating; nails piercing His hands and feet; spear piercing His side (John 19:34); great loss of blood and bodily fluids.

The women went to the wrong tomb.

In *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, Kirsopp Lake claimed that the women were confused in the dark and went to the wrong tomb. Not only is this contrary to what the Gospel accounts say, it makes no sense whatsoever. If the women had gone to the wrong tomb and reported that Christ had risen based on that mistake, the matter would soon have been cleared up. First, the disciples were not stupid. They would not have given their lives for the testimony of a few geographically-challenged women. They would have checked out the story thoroughly and would have come to the truth of the matter. Further, the Jewish leaders would have made certain that the matter was cleared up by producing the right tomb, and the body!

The disciples were hallucinating.

If they were hallucinating, it was a mass hallucination, because Paul said that the resurrected Christ was seen by above 500 people at once (1 Co. 15:5-8)!

When Paul wrote the epistle of 1 Corinthians, most of these eyewitnesses were still alive. Paul was not writing about things that had happened long ago.

Josh McDowell observes: "Let's take the more than 500 witnesses who saw Jesus alive after His death and burial, and place them in a courtroom. Do you realize that if each of those 500 people were to testify for only six minutes, including cross-examination, you would have an amazing 50 hours of firsthand testimony? Add to this the testimony of many other eyewitnesses and you would well have the largest and most lopsided trial in history" ("Evidence for the Resurrection").

It has been rightly said that "this theory makes Christ a fraud and his disciples near idiots." "Somehow the rugged fisherman Peter and his brother

Andrew, the characteristically doubting Thomas, the seasoned and not too sensitive tax gatherer, Matthew, the rather dull Philip, intensely loyal but a little slow of apprehension, do not fit easily into the conditions required for an absolutely unshakable collective hallucination. And if it is not both collective and unshakable it is of no use to us. The terrors and the persecutions these men ultimately had to face and did face unflinchingly, do not admit of a halfhearted adhesion secretly honeycombed with doubt" (Morison).

The disciples saw someone disguised as Jesus.

This is the proposal of Hugh Schonfield in *The Passover Plot*, but it is too ridiculous to waste time refuting. Having spent three years with Jesus, wouldn't the disciples know Him? They might be confused for a moment or even a short while, but eventually they would recognize that the individual was an impostor.

The body was stolen.

This was the story invented by the Jewish leaders. They paid the guards to lie and to say that the disciples stole Jesus' body (Mt. 28:11-15), but it is an impossible story.

First, if they were asleep how could they know what happened to the body, or if stolen, who stole it?

Second, sleeping on guard duty brought the death penalty in that day. That one of the guards might fall asleep is perhaps conceivable, but that all of them would fall asleep is not. As Richard Dickinson observes: "That without an exception all should have fallen asleep when they were stationed there for so extraordinary a purpose, to see that that body was not stolen, lest it should be said that the crucified Jesus had risen from the dead, may be possible; but it is not credible: especially when it is considered that these guards were subjected to the severest discipline in the world. It was death for a Roman sentinel to sleep on his post. Yet these guards were not executed; nor were they deemed culpable even by the rulers, woefully chagrined and exasperated as they must have been by the failure of their plan for securing the body" (*The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Historically and Logically Viewed*, 1865).

(That the guard was a Roman guard is clear from the passage. The Greek word for "watch" in Matthew 27:65, *koustodia*, is the word for a Roman sentry. A.T. Robertson says that "ye have a watch" is present imperative and refers to "a guard of Roman soldiers, not mere temple police." In Matthew 28:12 they are called "soldiers," which would not be the case if they were temple police. Further, Matthew 28:14 indicates that they were Roman guards, because they were afraid of what Pilate would do if he heard of the matter.)

Third, by their actions it is evident that the Jewish leaders didn't believe their own story. They didn't call the disciples to examine them when they found out the body was missing, and they made no effort to find the body. John Chrysostom, in the fourth century, observed that the story of the stealing of the body actually establishes the resurrection. "For this is the language of men confessing, that the body was not there. When therefore they confess the body was not there, but the stealing is shown to be false and incredible--by their watching by it, and by the seals, and by the timidity of the disciples--the proof of the resurrection even hence appears incontrovertible" (*The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, p. 264).

Further, who could have stolen Christ's body?

The Jews didn't steal it, because they wanted to prove that He did not rise.

The Roman government didn't steal it. The government sealed the tomb and had no reason to steal it and thus allow the Christians to say He had risen. They wanted to be rid of the trouble surrounding the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Joseph of Arimathea didn't steal it. He was Jesus' disciple and had no motive to steal His body. Further, he couldn't have stolen it alone, because he couldn't have removed the great stone, so he would have needed help, and doubtless someone would have reported the deed sooner or later.

The disciples didn't steal it. First, they were hiding in fear for their lives. Second, they had no opportunity, because the tomb was sealed and guarded. Third, they had no leader who could have envisioned and accomplished such a thing. Their leader, Peter, was a broken man at that point and had given up his discipleship to Jesus to go back to fishing (John 21:3). Fourth, they would have been fools to have suffered and died for a lie! The disciples

didn't suffer for what others had seen, such as Muslims who die for the Koran, but they died for what they had professedly seen themselves (Acts 4:18-20). Fifth, it would have been impossible for such a large number of people to have kept the secret hidden. "Even if it had been possible, and the disciples the men to do it, the subsequent history of Christianity would have been different. Sooner or later, someone who knew the facts would have been unable to keep them hidden" (Frank Morison, *Who Moved the Stone?*). Sixth, a great moral religion like we find in the New Testament, which exalts truth and honesty, could not have been founded upon a despicable deception.

"It is the complete failure of anyone to produce the remains, or to point to any tomb, official or otherwise, in which they were said to lie, and this ultimately destroys every theory based on the human removal of the body" (Morison).

We must not forget exactly what the early Christians suffered for their testimony that Christ had risen from the dead.

They were denounced by family and friends, hated by and considered the enemies of society, tortured, kept imprisoned for years in dark, rat-infested cells. Their property was confiscated. They were crucified, burned alive, torn apart by wild beasts, chopped into pieces, roasted on racks; their tongues were torn out and their eyes put out. They also had to endure the torture and death of beloved family members.

"Their master had recently perished as a malefactor, by the sentence of a public tribunal. His religion sought to overthrow the religions of the whole world. The laws of every country were against the teachings of His disciples. The interests and passions of all the rulers and great men in the world were against them. The fashion of the world was against them. Propagating this new faith, even in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, they could expect nothing but contempt, opposition, revilings, bitter persecutions, stripes, imprisonments, torments, and cruel deaths. Yet this faith they zealously did propagate; and all these miseries they endured undismayed, nay, rejoicing. As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigor and resolution. The annals of military warfare afford scarcely an example of the like heroic constancy, patience, and unblenching courage. They had every possible

motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith, and the evidences of the great facts and truths which they asserted; and these motives were pressed upon their attention with the most melancholy and terrific frequency. It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact. ... If then their testimony was not true, there was no possible motive for its fabrication" (Simon Greenleaf, *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice*, 1846).

Jesus rose spiritually but not bodily.

Jesus specifically refuted this by eating and letting the disciples touch Him (Luke 24:37-43).

Frank Morison set out to discredit the Gospel accounts of Christ's resurrection, and instead he concluded that the only thing that can satisfy the historical facts is that Jesus actually did rise from the dead.

We agree and we find it much easier to believe in Christ's resurrection, than to believe in the attempts to discredit it.

"The simple faith of the Christian who believes in the resurrection is nothing compared to the credulity of the skeptic who will accept the wildest and most improbable romances rather than admit the plain witness of historical certainties. The difficulties of belief may be great; the absurdities of unbelief are greater" (George Hanson, *The Resurrection and the Life*).

The reason why there are so many theories that attempt to discredit the Gospel accounts is that men are willfully blind sinners who do not want to submit to God (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Further, the unbelief of "Christian preachers" such as Kirsopp Lake was prophesied in Scripture (2 Peter 2:1-2).

c. The changed lives

Something dramatic happened to turn the disciples from fear (John 20:19) to great courage.

(1) Consider the testimony of Peter.

After denying Christ the night of His arrest, Peter was a defeated man. He determined to go back to fishing (John 21:3). A few weeks later, the man who had denounced Christ before a handful of Jews on the eve of Christ's crucifixion, preached boldly to a multitude of them on the day of Pentecost and 3,000 were converted. What could have wrought such a mighty change other than that he had become convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead?

(2) Consider the testimony of James, Jesus' half-brother.

Jesus' brothers were opposed to Him during His lifetime (John 7:7), but after Jesus rose from the dead, James believed and became a leader in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 1:19). James' conversion was prompted by Christ's resurrection appearance to him (1 Co. 15:7).

(3) Consider the testimony of Paul.

What converted Paul from being a bitter enemy of Christ to being one of His most zealous followers? From an earthly perspective, Paul had absolutely nothing to gain and everything to lose by following Christ. He admitted that he had "profited in the Jews' religion above many" (Gal. 1:14). Paul testified that it was the resurrected Christ who convinced him (Acts 22:3-21).

As a zealous Pharisee and leader of Christ's enemies among the Jews, Paul was in a position to know all about the story about the disciples stealing the body. Had he thought that Jesus' dead body actually lay hidden somewhere, he would never have believed in the resurrection. It is obvious that even he did not give any credence to this story.

(4) Consider the testimony of lawyers and judges.

Thomas Sherlock wasn't a lawyer but he was trained in law. He was a Cambridge-educated theologian in the Church of England, and he wrote a classic book that examines the evidence for the resurrection of Christ from a courtroom perspective. It is titled *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus* (1729). Sherlock wrote the book to rebut Deist Thomas Woolston's skeptical book *Discourses of the Miracles of Jesus Christ*. "Within the framework of a courtroom proceeding in which the Apostles are on trial for faking the Resurrection, Sherlock pits Woolston's own

arguments against his own powerful defense of the 'accused.' Applying the logic and reason of the law to the Bible, this is a provocative and original interpretation of the story of Jesus' life and death" (Bookkilden.no).

Simon Greenleaf, Royall Professor of Law at Harvard University, was one of the most celebrated legal minds of America. He is the author of the three-volume *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence*, which is "still considered the greatest single authority on evidence in the entire literature on legal procedure" (Wilbur Smith, *Therefore Stand*, 1972, p. 463). After a thorough examination, Greenleaf concluded that Jesus did rise from the dead. In 1846 he published *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice*. "All that Christianity asks of men is, that they would be consistent with themselves; that they would treat its evidences as they treat the evidence of other things; and that they would try and judge its actors and witnesses, as they deal with their fellow men, when testifying to human affairs and actions, in human tribunals. Let the witnesses [to the Resurrection] be compared with themselves, with each other, and with surrounding facts and circumstances; and let their testimony be sifted, as if it were given in a court of justice, on the side of the adverse party, the witness being subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. The result, it is confidently believed, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability and truth" (*An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists*).

Lord Darling, former Chief Justice of England, said: "The crux of the problem of whether Jesus was, or was not, what He proclaimed Himself to be, must surely depend upon the truth or otherwise of the resurrection. On that greatest point we are not merely asked to have faith. In its favour as living truth there exists such overwhelming evidence, positive and negative, factual and circumstantial, that no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is truth" (cited from Michael Green, *Man Alive*, 1969, p. 54).

Lord Caldecote, Lord Chief Justice of England, testified that "an overwhelming case for the Resurrection could be made merely as a matter of strict evidence. ... [Christ's] Resurrection has led me as often as I have tried to examine the evidence to believe it as a fact beyond dispute" (cited by Irwin Linton, *A Lawyer Examines the Bible*, p. xxiv, xxv).

Edmund Hatch Bennett was dean of the Boston University School of Law for more than 20 years, as well as a judge in the Massachusetts Probate Court. In 1899 he wrote *The Four Gospels from a Lawyer's Standpoint*. He begins by saying: "... this paper is the result of an effort, on my own part, to ascertain whether or not, independently of the exercise of a devout Christian faith, independently of any appeal to our religious sentiments, the truth of the story told in the four Gospels could be satisfactorily established by a mere reasoning process, and by applying the same principles and the same tests to the Gospel narratives that we observe in determining the truth or falsity of any other documents, or any other historical accounts." Bennett makes the following argument: "These stories began to be published not long after the alleged crucifixion. Many persons were then living who could have easily refuted the statements of the evangelists had they been untrue. The enemies of Jesus were still alive and active. The Scribe and the Pharisee, the Priest and the Levite, still smarted under his repeated denunciations. They had the disposition, the opportunity, and the incentive to deny the story of the miraculous birth, the spotless life, the marvelous works, the sublime death, the astounding resurrection, and the glorious ascension of our Lord, had the then published description of these events been totally fabulous. But so far as we know, no person then living ever uttered a protest against these accounts, and for two thousand years they have been received and treated as veritable history."

Irwin Linton, a Washington D.C. lawyer who argued cases before the Supreme Court, published *A Lawyer Examines the Bible: An introduction to Christian Evidences* in 1929. "Lawyers regularly sift through testimonies in order to separate falsehood from truth. A unique feature of this book is its weighing of testimonies in support of the Bible. Linton points out that lawyers ask witnesses seemingly trivial details because, while the main outlines of false testimony can be agreed upon in advance, the innumerable trifling details cannot. Apparent contradictions between the Resurrection accounts prove the absence of collusion, and the fact that they can be resolved adds credibility to the testimonies. So, far from being fatal, the apparent contradictions between the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection turn out to be support for the authenticity of the event. On this, Linton cites Paley: 'The existence of the difficulty proves the want or absence of that caution which usually accomplishes the consciousness of fraud; and the

solution proves that it is not the collusion of fortuitous propositions which we have to deal with, but that a thread of truth winds through the whole, which preserved every circumstance in its place'" (*A Lawyer Examines the Bible*, 1949 edition, p. 75).

J.N.D. Anderson (Sir Norman Anderson) is dean of the faculty of law in the University of London and director of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. He wrote *Christianity the Witness of History: A Lawyer's Approach* (1969). "The most radical theory of all is to dismiss the whole story as deliberate invention. But there is scarcely a single intelligent critic who would go so far. The adverse evidence is overwhelming. Think, first, of the number of witnesses. Paul tells us that in 56 A.D. the majority of some 500 original witnesses were still alive; and we must remember that most of the early records went out, as it were, with the collective authority of the primitive Church. Think, too, of the character of the witnesses. Not only did they give the world the highest moral and ethical teaching it has ever known, but they lived it out, as even their opponents were forced to admit. Again, think of the phenomenal change which these men underwent because of this alleged invention. Is it conceivable that a deliberate lie would change a company of cowards into heroes, and inspire them to a life of sacrifice, often ending only in martyrdom? Surely psychology teaches that nothing makes a man more prone to cowardice than a lie which preys on his conscience? Is it likely, moreover, that even in disillusionment or agony not a single one of these conspirators would ever have divulged the secret?" (Anderson, "The Evidence for the Resurrection," London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1950).

Albert Roper was a prominent Virginia attorney, a graduate of the University of Virginia law school, and one-time mayor of Norfolk. He made a thorough investigation into the evidence for the resurrection of Christ, asking the question, "Can any intelligent person accept the resurrection story?" At the end of his research he concluded, "Can any intelligent person deny the weight of this evidence?" He wrote the book *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?*

Christ's Great Commission after the resurrection

Christ met with the disciples for 40 days after the resurrection (Ac. 1:3).

1. The importance of the Great Commission: It is repeated in all four Gospels and in the book of Acts (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:44-48; Joh. 20:21; Acts 1:8).

Why is it repeated?

a. It is repeated for *emphasis*.

b. It is repeated for *instruction*. Each mention of the Commission adds more instruction.

2. The authority of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18)

a. We have the authority to go to *any* nation and to speak to *any* person. This is in contrast to the popular idea that religion is a private matter.

b. We do not preach ourselves; we are merely ambassadors for Christ.

3. The work of the Great Commission

MATTHEW 28:18-20

a. Preach the gospel (Mt. 28:19) (as we will see in Mark 16, the teaching here refers to the gospel)

b. Baptize believers (Mt. 28:19)

(1) This is a command, not an option.

(2) The baptism is in the name of the Trinity. Note that the word "name" is singular. There are three in the godhead but they are not three Gods but one God in three persons. The Philadelphia Confession of Faith (1742) stated: "In this Divine and Infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word (or Son), and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided; the Father is of none neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and our comfortable dependence on him."

c. Make disciples (Mt. 28:20a)

(1) The work is not finished when someone is saved and baptized; in fact, it has only begun.

(2) We are to teach ALL things.

This will make you a fundamentalist! It is impossible to be involved in the ecumenical movement if you seek to obey all of the Bible. It is impossible to be a New Evangelical if you take all of the Bible seriously and refuse to focus merely on the positive.

This also means each church is to be a Bible training center. In the book of Acts we see that the apostles fulfilled Christ's Commission by establishing churches. It is the churches that are to teach the believers ALL things.

This also means that the churches need to teach the entire Bible, as Christ is the Author of all of it.

(3) This is a promise of the preservation of Scripture. It would be impossible for churches of each generation to teach all things unless they were confident that they had the preserved Scriptures.

(4) This shows *how* the Scriptures are preserved. They are preserved by their use among God's people and in the churches.

d. Note the Lord's promise (Mt. 28:20b)

(1) The work and the power is Christ's. He has promised to be with us.

(2) This promises the perpetuity of the true churches.

This is contrary to the teaching of Protestantism, which claims that the true churches largely ceased to exist through the Dark Ages until the Reformation allegedly revived them.

This is contrary to the philosophy of those today who abandon the church, claiming that there are no true churches.

This is contrary to the doctrine of the founder of Family Radio, who says the church age has ended and churches are irrelevant to the Lord's work today.

MARK 16:14-20

a. The gospel is to be preached to every person (not only every nation) (Mk. 16:15).

b. What is the gospel? It is the death, burial, and resurrection for our sins (1 Co. 15:1-4).

c. By commanding us to preach the gospel to every creature, we are taught that God loves every soul and desires every person to be saved, and every person *can* be saved. Compare 1 Tim. 2:4 and 2 Pet. 3:9.

d. Baptism *follows* salvation as the testimony and evidence thereof (Mk. 16:16). The verse does not say that those who are not baptized are damned; it says those who do not *believe* are damned. It is not failing to be baptized that brings the judgment of God upon the sinner but failing to believe in Jesus Christ. To that, the rest of the New Testament agrees.

e. The gospel was confirmed by miracles (Mk. 16:18-20). Christ did miracles to confirm his Messiahship (John 20:30-31); the apostles did miracles to confirm their office (2 Co. 12:12).

LUKE 24:44-48

a. The Scriptures are written to present Christ and the gospel (Lk. 24:44).

b. The Bible cannot be understood apart from divine help (Lk. 24:45).

c. It was necessary for Jesus to suffer so that men might be saved (Lk. 24:46-47).

d. Repentance is part of the great commission (Lk. 24:47). Jesus taught that there is no remission of sins without repentance.

e. Each believer is responsible to participate in this work (Lk. 24:48)

JOHN 20:19-23

a. The work of the Great Commission is given to all of the disciples (compare Joh. 20:19 and 21).

b. We do not preach in order to gain God's favor but because we already have his favor (Joh. 20:21). Contrast the Jehovah's Witnesses and others who work *in order to* be saved.

c. We can do nothing apart from the Holy Spirit (Joh. 20:22).

d. There is no means of forgiveness of sins apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ (Joh. 20:23). If we do not carry the gospel to the unsaved, they cannot be saved in any other way.

ACTS 1:6-8

a. Our business today is not looking for signs (Acts 1:6-7) (contrast speculative prophecy).

b. The church's main business is the Great Commission (Acts 1:8). If we get sidetracked from that, who will do it? Governments and businesses and international organizations can do many things, but the Great Commission is something only the churches can do. In Acts we see that the apostles kept their focus exclusively upon this great work.

c. We can do nothing without the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

d. The Great Commission starts at home, at "Jerusalem." It is unscriptural and hypocritical for a church to support missions but not to be zealous to reach its own neighborhood and city with the gospel.

e. Every church is also to seek to preach the gospel as far as possible beyond its own neighborhood. This is done through sending and supporting evangelists and missionaries.

The Gospel of Mark

The author and date

1. The author of the Gospel of Mark is John Mark (Acts 12:12).

   a. He was the nephew of Barnabas (Col. 4:10).

   b. Paul and Barnabas brought him from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 12:25).

   c. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but he quit during the early part of the trip (Acts 13:5, 13).

   d. Paul and Barnabas had a falling out because of John Mark (Acts 15:37-39).

   e. Later, Paul said that John Mark was profitable to him (2 Tim. 4:11).

2. Mark was written between A.D. 57 and 63.

Theme and distinctive features

1. The emphasis of Mark is on Christ as the Servant of Jehovah. The prophets said Jesus would be many things. He would be God (Isa. 9:6) and He would also be the Servant of God (Isaiah 42:1; 52:13).

   a. The key word in Greek is "eutheos," which is translated "straightway, forthwith, anon, immediately, as soon as." It is used 42 times in Mark, which is more than in all of the rest of the N.T. combined.

   b. The key verse is Mk. 10:45.

   c. There is no genealogy and no record of Jesus' early years.

   d. Jesus is shown to be a "man of sorrows" more in Mark than in the other Gospels (Isaiah 53:3). His grief at the people's unbelief is also brought out more clearly (Mark 3:5; 7:34; 8:12; 8:17-18; 9:19).

   e. His rejection at his home town of Nazareth is described in more detail (Mark 6:1-6).

2. Even though Christ is presented as God's Servant, He is also shown to be deity (Mk. 1:1; 5:19-20; 10:17-18).

Miscellaneous lessons

1. The "kingdom of God" vs. "kingdom of heaven" (Mark 1:14).

a. The term "kingdom of heaven" is only used in Matthew.

b. The "kingdom of God" and the "kingdom of heaven" are normally used to describe the same kingdom; they are often used interchangeably (Mt. 19:23-24).

(1) Compare Mt. 4:17 with Mk. 1:14

(2) Compare Mt. 5:3 with Lk. 6:20

(3) Compare Mt. 8:11 with Lk. 13:28-29

(4) Compare Mt. 13:11 with Mk. 4:11

(5) Compare Mt. 19:14 with Mk. 10:14

(6) Compare Mt. 19:23 with Mk. 10:23.

c. This kingdom is the future, earthly Davidic kingdom promised in the O.T. (Mk. 14:25; Lk. 13:28-30; 21:31; 22:28-30).

d. The two terms possibly emphasize the source of the same kingdom in two ways: The kingdom that is from God, and the kingdom that is from heaven.

e. The kingdom of God will not come until after the Great Tribulation and the second coming of Christ (Mt. 25:31; Lk. 19:11-22; 21:31).

f. New Testament believers are not yet entered into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22; 2 Th. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:1, 18; 2 Pet. 1:11).

2. Mark includes one of Jesus' most powerful sermons on hell (Mark 9:43-50).

a. Jesus preached on hell many times (Mk. 9:43-48; Mt. 5:22; 11:23; 13:42, 50; 18:8-9; 23:33; 25:41, 46; Lk. 16:19-31)

b. Why did Jesus exhort people to pluck out their eyes or cut off their hands and feet? He was not suggesting that the sinner literally do this, because that would not stop the sinner from sinning and would not keep him out of hell. It is not our hands, feet, and eyes that are the core problem; it is the heart that drives them and the sin that is rooted in the heart (Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:20-23). In this sermon Christ was making men understand how serious sin is and how real hell is and how impossible it is for a man to cleanse himself from sin and escape hell by his own power. Christ was using the law of Moses for its intended purpose,

which is to show men their lost, sinful condition and lead them to salvation through the grace of God (Ro. 3:19; Gal. 3:23).

c. What about the fire? There is no reason to believe that it is not literal.

"fire is not quenched" (Mk. 9:44, 46, 48)
"unquenchable fire" (Mt. 3:12)
"hell fire" (Mt. 5:22; 18:9)
"furnace of fire" (Mt. 13:42, 50)
"everlasting fire" (Mt. 18:8; 25:41)
"tormented in this flame" (Lk. 16:24)
"eternal fire" (Jude 7)
"lake of fire and brimstone" (Re. 14:10; 20:10; 21:8)

d. What about the worm?

(1) The prophet Isaiah connected worms with hell (Isa. 14:11; 66:24). In fact, it appears that Christ was quoting from Isaiah.

(2) The worm could refer to actual worms of some sort that feed on the damned in hell. The Greek word for hell used by Jesus here is "gheh-en-nah" which originally referred to the valley of Hinnom, a narrow valley south of Jerusalem (Josh. 15:8). It became the place of wicked idolatry (2 Chr. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 7:31; 32:35) and was thus polluted by King Josiah (2 Ki. 23:10). It was made into a refuse dump and fires were kept burning there and worms ate the garbage. Jesus used this place as an illustration to describe the awfulness of hell.

(3) The worm could refer to the unsaved person himself. Perhaps it is a description of the type of body the unsaved will have in the eternal fires. The Bible speaks of "THEIR worm" (Mk. 9:44). Note that the worm is singular, not plural. Also in Isaiah 66:24, the worm seems to be associated with the "carcases" or bodies of the condemned.

(4) Some have speculated that the worm could refer to the sinner's conscience that will gnaw at him through all eternity. For example Matthew Henry says: "The reflections and reproaches of the sinner's own conscience are the worm that dieth not; which will cleave to the damned soul as the worms do to the dead body, and prey upon it, and never leave it till it is quite devoured. 'Son, remember,' will set this worm gnawing; and how

terribly will it bite with that word (Pr. 5:12, 23), How have I hated instruction! The soul that is food to this worm, dies not; and the worm is bred in it, and one with it, and therefore neither doth that die. Damned sinners will be to eternity accusing, condemning, and upbraiding, themselves with their own follies, which, how much soever they are now in love with them, will at the last bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder."

(5) Whatever the worm means, we know it is a horrible thing that is associated with the torment of eternal hell, and we know that the loving Savior warned men not to allow anything to keep them from receiving His salvation so they will not go to this terrible place.

e. What about the salt? (Mark 9:49-50)

(1) Verse 49 probably has a three-fold meaning:

Christ uses the salt in reference to eternal punishment (Malachi 3:2). These verses are connected with the previous verses from Mark 9:44, 46, 48, which contain Christ's warning about eternal hell. "...as the salt applied to the sacrifice was the symbol of preservation [Lev. 2:13], so fire here is symbolical of preservation, not, alas! *from* punishment, but *for* punishment so that the undying worm and the unquenchable fire, instead of annihilating, preserve while they punish. Here is a fearful figure, and a terrible warning!" (*The Pulpit Commentary*).

It could also refer to testing of the believer's faith by trials and persecution (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

It could also refer to the judgment seat of Christ whereby the believer's works will be tested by fire (1 Co. 3:13).

(2) In verse 50, Christ uses the salt in reference to holiness in the life of the believer. The Christian is to have salt in himself, meaning he is to nurture the life of God which indwells him to purify and preserve him. A similar exhortation is contained in Colossians 4:6. The salt here describes speech that is wise and gracious, which preserves and purifies those who hear it. Salt also irritates when it enters a wound. Sound speech does the same to the unsaved and to the carnal Christian because it convicts of sin.

3. What did Jesus mean in Mark 13:32 when He said that He did not know the hour of His coming?

a. *This verse is connected with the Son's unity with and submission to the Father*. The Lord Jesus Christ might have been referring to the completeness of His union with and submission to the Father. In other words, it is not the Son who knows but the Father, and the Son knows nothing apart from the Father. The Bible reveals the one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All are God and are co-equal, but there is an order within the Godhead, so that the Son submits to the Father.

"Our Saviour does not deny that the knowledge of that day and hour dwells in fullest measure with the Son, but He mysteriously intimates (in conformity with what is found to have been His practice on many other occasions), that the Son Himself does but know because of His oneness with the Father, the Fountain-head of all knowledge and of all being, who had reserved that secret from the holy angels themselves. He knows because the Father knows. He would not know, if not (*ei me*) the Father knew" (John William Burgon, cited by Edward Goulburn, *John William Burgon: Late Dean of Chichester*, 1892, II, pp. 171, 172).

b. *This verse is connected with the Lord's "kenosis" spoken of in Philippians 2:6-8.*

(1) In the incarnation, the Lord Jesus Christ "made himself of no reputation" (Phil. 2:7). He was still God but He willingly limited Himself.

(2) The Greek word is "kenoo," meaning also "to empty, to abase, to make of none effect" (Strong's).

(3) John Champion makes the following excellent comments: "*Kenosis* is the Greek word which Paul used in describing the act of Christ in 'emptying himself' of His infinite powers and heavenly glory out of place or too great to be used in the finite limitations and local form of the human life into which He came. In his *kenosis*, the Eternal Son dropped for the time being THE EXERCISE OF certain powers and attributes, but He remained Himself. He who lays these aside, is not Himself laid aside. He was still God the Son in holy will, divine desire, righteous purpose, and immaculate love. The infinity of powers not needed or suited within the narrow scope of a human life, He laid aside. Jesus himself taught this doctrine before Paul did. He referred more than once to His personal preexistence. Concerning his *kenosis* he said: 'And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was' (John 17:5). And

again, 'What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?' (John 6:62)" (John Champion, *The Virgin's Son*, 1924, pp. 88, 89).

(4) Modernists have misused the Philippians passage to claim it in support of their view that Jesus Christ is not God. We would again emphasize that the Lord Jesus Christ in no sense gave up His Deity in His incarnation. Philippians 2:5-8 says He was in the form of God and was equal with God, but He took the form of a servant. It was merely the form that He changed, not His Deity.

4. Does Mark 16:15-16 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation?

a. By comparing Scripture with Scripture, we know that it is faith that saves, and baptism is the symbol and evidence of one's faith. Consider seven of the many reasons we know that baptism is not a part of one's salvation:

(1) Mark 16:16 does not say that those who are not baptized shall be damned; it says those who do not believe will be damned.

(2) When the Philippian jailer asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul did not reply that he needed to believe and be baptized. He replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:30-31). Believe, period. After the jailer believed on Christ, he was baptized that same night, but it was the first step of obedience following his salvation.

(3) The story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:36-38 shows us that baptism follows after salvation. First one must believe on Christ as Lord and Saviour, and baptism follows as the picture of one's salvation.

(4) Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit BEFORE they were baptized (Acts 10:43-48).

(5) The Holy Spirit is the mark and seal of sonship and salvation and He seals those who believe; nothing is said about baptism (Eph. 1:11-12).

(6) If baptism were a part of salvation, the Apostle Paul would not have said, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1 Co. 1:17).

(7) Baptism is not part of the Gospel that Paul preached. See 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. In this passage Paul declared the Gospel "in a nutshell," and there is no mention of baptism.

b. Baptism is important, but it follows salvation and is not a part of the Gospel. It is a first step of obedience *after* salvation. It is the picture or figure of salvation (1 Pet. 3:21).

c. Baptism is also an evidence of salvation. A person who says he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ but who does not submit to baptism is probably deceiving himself.

(1) The Ethiopian eunuch was *eager* to be baptized (Acts 8:35-38).

(2) There is not one example in the book of Acts of someone being saved who did not then get baptized.

d. Mark 16:16 also refutes infant baptism, because it plainly says that believing must precede baptism, and an infant is incapable of believing on Christ.

5. What about Mark 16:17-18? When were these signs fulfilled? Should we expect that believers will practice these things throughout the church age?

a. These signs were fulfilled by the apostles. It was to the apostles that the Lord gave special sign gifts (2 Co. 12:12; Acts 2:43; 4:33; 5:12, 15; 19:12). The apostles cast out devils (Acts 16:18) and spoke in new tongues (Acts 2:1-4) and took up serpents (Acts 28:3-6) and laid hands on the sick and they recovered (Acts 3:6-8; 9:40-41; 28:7-9).

b. The gift of tongues was chiefly a sign to the nation Israel that God was doing a new thing by extending the gospel to all people and creating a new spiritual body composed both of Jews and Gentiles (1 Co. 14:20-22; Isa. 28:11-13). It was a temporary sign (1 Co. 13:8) that ceased when the nation Israel rejected it and was judged (Isa. 28:13). Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. and the Jews were scattered to the nations.

c. No one can do the specific apostolic signs today. Those who claim to do them do not work after the fashion that we see in Acts. No one is raising the dead like Peter did in Acts 9. No one is healing after the fashion of Acts 3:6-8. There are no "healing services" or "signs and wonders crusades" in the book of Acts. There were no spirit slayings or spiritual drunkenness. The apostles did not have signs of healing such as fire or electricity in their hands. Not once did the apostles attempt to heal someone and fail. The wondrous miracles recorded in the book of Acts are simply not being reproduced in churches today.

d. Though the apostolic sign gifts ceased the Lord has continued to do miracles throughout the church age. He has redeemed countless souls from the power of Satan and has supernaturally answered countless prayers and has supernaturally supplied countless needs and has given supernatural strength and encouragement and wisdom to countless men and women in every conceivable situation and difficulty and has healed countless people in answer to prayer in accordance with James 5 and has miraculously established countless churches in the devil's own territory and many other things.

6. What about the textual authority of Mark 16:9-20?

a. This passage is omitted or questioned in many of the modern versions.

(1) The English Revised New Testament of 1881 was the first to question this passage. Verses 9-20 were separated from the rest of the chapter and this footnote is included: "The two oldest Greek manuscripts, and some other authorities, omit from ver. 9 to the end."

(2) The New International Version separates this passage from the rest of the text and has this note: "The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20."

(3) The Today's English Version puts verses 9-20 in brackets and has this footnote: "Some manuscripts and ancient translations do not have this ending to the Gospel."

b. The chief authority for omitting the passage is that it is left out of the Sinaiticus and the Vaticanus Greek manuscripts. I saw the Sinaiticus at the British Library in March 2003, and it was opened to this passage. There is a large blank space where verses 9-20 should be.

c. From a practical standpoint, to omit these verses means that Mark's Gospel ends with the disciples trembling and amazed and "afraid" (Mark 16:8). The omission removes the victorious appearances of Jesus, His Great Commission, the ascension, and the miraculous spread of the gospel.

d. Mark 16:9-20 was defended textually by John Burgon in *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to Saint Mark, vindicated against recent critical Objectors and established*, 1871. This has been reprinted and is available from the Dean Burgon Society, www.deanburgonsociety.org.

The Gospel of Luke

Author and date

1. The author

   a. The traditional author of this Gospel is Luke the beloved physician (Col. 4:14).

   b. He was one of Paul's co-workers (Philemon 24).

   c. He was also the author of the book of Acts. Compare Luke 1:1-4 with Acts 1:1-2.

2. Luke's Gospel was written between A.D. 63 and 68.

The nature of Luke's writing

Luke claimed divine inspiration for his Gospel (Lk. 1:1-4). If he wrote the book under normal circumstances, the following would have been proud and presumptuous claims:

1. He claimed to have had "perfect understanding of all things" (Lk. 1:3).

2. He said to be able to impart "the certainty" of those things (Lk. 1:4).

Theme and distinctive features

1. The emphasis of Luke is on Christ as the Perfect Man.

   a. Luke gives the genealogy of Christ back to Adam, the first man (Lk. 3:38).

   b. Luke gives more about Christ's birth and youth than the other Gospels.

   c. Luke gives the information about Jesus visiting the home of Mary and Martha (Lk. 10:38-42), which depicts Him as a man enjoying the family setting.

2. It is important to note that Luke, as John, also portrays Jesus as God (Lk. 1:32, 35).

3. Jesus knew His calling from the beginning (Lk. 2:48-49). Compare Psalm 22:9-10; Heb. 10:5.

4. Prophecy must be interpreted literally and dispensationally (Lk. 4:16-21). Compare Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus quoted the part of the prophecy about His first coming and stopped before quoting the part about His second coming. The Old Testament prophets did not see the church age.

5. What about Luke 5:1-11? Why is this different from the accounts in Mt. 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20?

Note: Lake Gennesaret is the Sea of Galilee. It is also called the "sea of Tiberias" (Joh. 6:1).

a. There are two possibilities:

(1) This might be a second call to service. God is very persistent in His call. Jonah is an example (Jon. 1:1-2 and 3:1-2).

(2) This might be the same situation as described in Matthew and Mark but Luke gives more information about what happened.

b. Jesus told Peter to let down the "nets" plural, but he let down only one (vv. 4-5). We must do the Lord's work in accordance with His Word, or confusion and damage will result.

c. By this miracle, Jesus began to reveal Himself to the apostles (v. 8) and they slowly began to understand who He was. We are saved immediately when we receive Christ as Lord and Saviour, but we will grow in our understanding of Him forever.

6. The blessing of giving (Lk. 6:38). This is not mentioned in the other Gospels, but it is a truth that is taught throughout the Scriptures. Compare Deu. 24:19; Prov. 3:9-10; 11:24-25; 13:7; 19:17; 22:9; Ecc. 11:1-2; Mal. 3:10; 2 Co. 9:6-8.

7. James and John wanted to call fire from heaven (Lk. 9:51-56).

a. The Samaritans were as prejudiced against the Jews as the Jews were against them. Those who preach against racial prejudice often focus on one certain type of prejudice by one group and ignore the fact that racial pride and prejudice is a part of man's fallen nature and is found to some degree among all unsaved men.

b. The reaction of James and John teaches us that even good men who know and love the Lord make mistakes and commit sins and need to be corrected.

c. Jesus' reply teaches us that it is never His will in this age for His people to persecute those who do not follow the truth or to attempt to enforce the truth by violence.

8. What does it mean to hate one's father, mother, wife, etc. (Lk. 14:26-27)?

a. "To hate" here means to love less. It means that God must be first.

b. For example, if a person is called to go to France as a missionary and his mother wants him to stay at home and take care of her, if France is chosen, it will look (to the natural man) like the mother is hated.

9. The account of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31)

a. Why did Jesus preach about hell?

(1) Jesus preached on hell 14 times in the four Gospels, and He preached on hell because he loves men and doesn't want them to go to hell.

(2) Hell teaches us that God is a holy God who hates sin; it teaches us about God's wrath.

b. Is this a parable?

Jesus never mentioned personal names in parables. Compare Lk. 16:20, 23. (Why isn't the rich man's name given? Perhaps because of Proverbs 10:7.)

c. Why did one man go to heaven and the other to hell?

It was not because one was rich and one was poor; men are only saved by faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16-18). Apparently the beggar had heard about Jesus and put his faith in him, like the thief on the cross.

d. What does this teach us about life?

(1) It is more important to be saved and to know Christ than to be rich.

(2) We need to look beyond this short life; we need to see life by God's eyes not man's eyes. Many men doubtless envied the rich man and despised the poor man.

e. What does this teach us about death?

Death is a journey either to heaven or to hell (Lk. 16:22-23). death is not sleeping in the grave. It is the body that sleeps, not the spirit (Jam. 2:26).

f. What does this teach us about angels?

They help those who are saved (Heb. 1:14). Angels are mentioned many times in Acts. They opened the prison for apostles (Acts 5:19); told Philip to go to the desert (Acts 10:3); told Cornelius to send for Peter (Acts 10:3); opened the prison for Peter (Acts 12:7-11); and encouraged Paul on the ship (Acts 27:23-24).

g. What is "Abraham's bosom"?

This is a description of heaven. It is called this because Abraham is the father of faith (Ro. 4:11). The term "bosom" speaks of intimacy and nearness (Joh. 1:18; 13:23). The believing Jews shared Abraham's covenant and blessings.

h. What does this passage teach us about hell?

(1) Hell is a place of fire and torment (Lk. 16:23-24).

(2) Hell is a place of no mercy or comfort or help (Lk. 16:24).

(3) Hell is a place of remembrance (Lk. 16:25).

(4) Hell is a place of no hope and no escape; no second chance after death (Lk. 16:26).

(5) Hell is a place of unanswered prayer (Lk. 16:27-28) (remorse is not the same as repentance).

(6) Hell is a place of unchanged sinners (Lk. 16:29-30). The unsaved rich man still refuses to hear and accept truth. He is still argumentative, stubborn, self-willed. He still looks for an excuse as to why sinners do not believe. The best evidence of salvation is obedience to God's Word (John 8:47; 10:27).

i. What does this passage teach us about miracles? (Lk. 16:31)

Miracles do not produce faith. Miracles can point people to Jesus but they don't give people faith in Jesus. Only the Word of God produces faith. Compare Romans 10:17.

j. What does this passage teach for the unbeliever?

The unbeliever must receive Christ before it is too late; we don't know about tomorrow (James 4:13-14).

k. What does this passage teach for the believer?

(1) We need to make sure that we are born again and not just a nominal Christian.

(2) We need to be busy telling people about Jesus; life is short and there is no second chance after death.

(3) We must serve God today while we have opportunity.

10. The conversion of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1-10).

a. The publicans were tax collectors who worked for the Roman government and took taxes from the Jews. They were hated, because many of them were corrupt and stole from the people.

b. Zacchaeus was interested in Jesus and made an effort to see Him. The Bible says that sinners should seek after God (Acts 17:27).

c. Jesus invited Zacchaeus to come and he received him joyfully (Lk. 19:5-6). Compare Acts 2:41. "...they that gladly received his word..."

d. The Jews complained that Jesus was eating with a sinner (Lk. 19:7). Note that Jesus was not partying with Zacchaeus in a worldly way; He was witnessing to him.

e. Zacchaeus showed the evidence of his repentance (Lk. 19:8).

f. Salvation is not a process; it is an event (Lk. 19:9).

g. A true son of Abraham has faith in the Messiah (Lk. 19:9). Compare Ro. 4:16.

h. Jesus used this occasion to state the main purpose of His coming (Lk. 19:10).

Lessons about Luke 21

1. How does Luke 21 compare to Matthew 24?

a. They cover the same time period, but there is a gap between Lk. 21:11 and Lk. 21:25. Verses 12-24 describe events not mentioned in Matthew.

b. Lk. 21:12-19 is a two-fold prophecy:

(1) It describes the persecution of the early believers by the Jews and Romans.

(2) It also describes the persecution during the days of the Tribulation.

c. Lk. 21:20-24 is a two-fold prophecy:

(1) It describes the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

(2) It looks beyond that to the days of the antichrist when Jerusalem will again be destroyed.

2. Faith and perseverance are the evidence of salvation (Lk. 21:19). Compare Heb. 10:35-38.

3. The church age believer will only see these things "begin to come to pass" (v. 28) and will then be caught up with the Lord to heaven to escape the time of wrath (1 The. 1:9-10; 5:9). In contrast, the kingdom will not appear until "all these things" shall occur (Mt. 24:33).

4. The kingdom of God is yet future (Lk. 21:31). The Charismatics who are preaching "kingdom theology" and "kingdom power" are confused about the dispensations.

5. Why does Jesus say to "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass" (Lk. 21:36)?

a. He is not saying that a person cannot know for sure that he is saved. Contrast 1 John 5:11-13.

b. He is referring to making sure of one's salvation, of proving one's salvation, giving good evidence of it, making sure that you are not deceived or a hypocrite like Judas. Compare 2 Co. 13:5; 2 Tim. 2:19; 2 Pet. 1:10. We might not fully understand these verses, but we must believe them and take them seriously.

Miracles peculiar to Luke

There are seven miracles that only Luke describes. Following are two of these:

1. The widow's son raised from the dead (Lk. 7:11-17).

a. The mother was a widow and this was her only son, and Jesus had compassion upon her (Lk. 7:12-13). Jesus loves all men.

b. Jesus raised the young man with His Word. He is not like the magicians who need amulets and special items to assist them in their miracles.

c. The people thought Jesus was a great prophet, but He was more than that (v. 16). It is not enough to believe in Jesus. We must believe in Him as Lord and

Saviour and accept everything the Bible testifies about Him. To do otherwise, is to believe in a false christ.

2. The ten lepers cleansed (Lk. 17:11-19)

a. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, passing through Samaria.

(1) Samaria was a land of mixed religion, part Jewish and part pagan (2 Kings 17)

The Jews were taken away captive (2 Ki. 17:5-6).

Pagan idolaters from other places were brought in to populate Samaria (2 Ki. 17:24).

The religion there became a mixture of truth and error, of Judaism and idolatry (2 Ki. 17:28-34).

(2) After those days, the Jews hated the Samaritans (Joh. 4:9).

b. The lepers asked for mercy (Lk. 17:13), thus acknowledging their sinful condition.

c. Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priest (Lk. 17:14). That was in fulfillment of Lev. 14:2-32.

d. Jesus took note that only one of the lepers returned to thank Him (Lk. 17:17-18). God loves a thankful spirit.

Parables peculiar to Luke

Of the 42 parables in the Gospels, 16 are peculiar to Luke and they include some of the most popular and famous of Jesus' parables. Following are some of these:

1. The Parable of the Two Debtors (Lk. 7:36-50)

a. To interpret parables properly, we must consider the context. Here the context is Jesus reproving the Pharisee for his proud, self-righteous spirit.

b. This parable teaches that those who confess their sin (like the lowly woman) love God more than the self-righteous (like Simon) who do not believe they are sinners. The woman humbled herself to wipe Jesus' feet with her hair and sacrificed an expensive possession to Jesus, whereas the proud Pharisee didn't even show Jesus the common courtesies of the day.

c. God's forgiveness is free (Lk. 7:42).

d. Simon's problem was not that he had no sin but that he believed himself to be righteous and therefore did not confess his sin. "The problem with Simon was not that he hadn't sinned much but that he hadn't confessed much! We must confess much to love much" (Bruce Lackey).

e. Many show an interest in Jesus who are not saved and who do not believe themselves to be needy sinners. Though Simon invited Jesus to his home, he did not believe in Christ. He said to himself, "This man, IF he were a prophet..." (Lk. 7:39).

f. Verse 39 proves the deity of Jesus as well as the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. Human authors cannot know the thoughts of men, but the Bible tells us what men were thinking.

2. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37)

a. Again, we understand the parable by looking at the context, the situation. The lawyer asked Jesus how to gain eternal life, and Jesus replied by telling him the requirements of the law. Seeing that he had to love his neighbor, the lawyer was trying to justify himself by thinking that his neighbor might only be his close friends and relatives. Thus he asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?"

b. The main lesson of the parable is that according to the law, my neighbor is any needy person whom I can help.

c. The Pharisees weakened the law of God so that it conformed to their lives instead of submitting their lives to the Scriptures (v. 29). The lawyer was trying to say that his neighbor is only his family and friends, and as long as he was kind to his family and friends, then he was fulfilling the law.

d. Jesus was not saying that a person can be saved by keeping the law. He was showing what the law really requires and that no man keeps the law. The law was not given to save men but to show men that they are sinners and to lead them to Christ (Gal. 3:10-13, 24-26).

3. The Parable of the Persistent Friend (Lk. 11:5-13)

a. The main lesson is that we must be persistent in prayer to receive God's answer. The context is the disciples' request for Jesus to teach them to pray (Lk. 11:1).

b. We aren't told why this is true, but we are instructed to pray in this way. We do not have to understand everything about prayer; we simply have to obey God's Word.

c. What if we ask for something that is wrong?

(1) God will not answer prayers that are contrary to the Bible. For example, we cannot pray that the devil will get saved!

(2) God will show us when our prayers are wrong. Compare 2 Co. 12:7-10.

(3) When we walk closely with God, He gives us the right desires and will guide our prayers (Psa. 37:4).

d. What does it mean to ask the Father and he will "give the Holy Spirit" (Lk. 11:13)?

(1) It does not mean that the Holy Spirit Himself is given in answer to prayer. The Holy Spirit is given to those who believe on Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:12-14; Joh. 7:38-39). Romans tells us plainly that if a person does not have the Holy Spirit, he is not saved (Ro. 8:9).

(2) It means that we should pray for the Spirit's power and assistance and guidance and wisdom. We receive the Holy Spirit by faith in Christ, and after we have the Holy Spirit, we must earnestly seek His power and assistance in our Christian lives.

(3) Note that we do not pray to the Spirit but we pray to the Father for the help of the Spirit. There is no example in the New Testament of believers praying to the Holy Spirit.

4. The Parable of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son (Lk. 15:1-32)

a. By looking at the context, we see the meaning of the parables. Jesus spoke these parables to teach that God loves sinners and seeks to save them (Lk. 15:1-3). He emphasizes this great truth by giving not one but three parables.

b. The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Lk. 15:3-7).

(1) The parable shows how diligently the Good Shepherd seeks after the lost.

(2) God loves every sinner and is not willing that any should be lost. Compare 2 Pet. 3:9.

(3) The lost sheep cannot save himself; he cannot find his own way back. He must be sought and saved.

(4) The parable of the lost sheep shows the strength and compassion of the Good Shepherd in putting the sheep on his shoulders and carrying him back to the fold.

(5) Verse 7 does not mean that some people do not need to repent. It means, rather, that many sinners are like the Pharisees and they refuse to acknowledge their sin. They *think* they do not need to repent.

c. The Parable of the Lost Coin (Lk. 15:8-10)

(1) The silver coin describes the value of man's soul (Mt. 16:26).

(2) God diligently seeks after lost sinners (Lk. 15:8).

(3) The light is the Gospel (Lk. 15:8).

(4) God has great joy at the salvation of sinners.

(5) Jesus describes salvation as "repentance." Compare Lk. 24:47; Acts 11:18; 20:21; 26:20; 2 Pet. 3:9.

d. The Parable of the Lost Son (Lk. 15:11-32). This parable describes the love of God the father for wayward sinners.

(1) The father is God and the younger son is the foolish sinner who goes away from God.

(2) The rebellious son is unthankful toward his father and does not acknowledge that everything he has is because of the father (Acts 17:25).

(3) The rebellious son falsely thinks that true freedom is the freedom to do whatever one desires. In reality, that is bondage to sin (Joh. 8:44). True freedom is to walk in God's will.

(4) The father allows the son to leave. God allows men to go their own way. He does not force them to love him. If love is forced, it is not true love. Men are made in God's image and have great responsibility. Men can say no to God.

(5) The father knew that the son would be punished but he did not try to protect him from the wages of sin. Earthly fathers must allow rebellious sons

to be punished and not step in to protect them. The punishment can help bring the sinner to repentance.

(6) The wages of sin is death and the son is brought low because of his sin.

(7) The son's repentance is seen in verses 18-19. Repentance is directed toward God and is evidenced by a change in attitude toward men we have offended.

(8) The father was continually looking for the son and saw him coming "a great way off" (Lk. 15:20).

(9) The father "ran" to meet the repentant son, thus showing how quick God is to grant mercy.

(10) The son was given back his position as a son (Lk. 15:22-23). Compare Ro. 8:15; Gal. 4:5.

(11) The elder son represents those who do not commit outward terrible sins and are not compassionate toward those who do. Like the Pharisees, they become self-righteous and think that they are better than other sinners. Many who grow up in churches and Christian homes are like this. They compare themselves with others and see that they haven't committed some of the "big" sins such as drinking and partying and gambling and fornication, and they begin to think that they are better than other sinners. Compare 1 Co. 10:12 and Galatians 6:1.

The Gospel of John

The author and date

1. The traditional author of this Gospel is the apostle John (compare Joh. 21:20-24 and 13:23-25). We know that this author is a close companion of Peter, so we assume it is John.

2. It was written between 85 and 90 A.D.

Outline of John's Gospel

1. The Prologue (Joh. 1:1-14)

2. The witness of John the Baptist (Joh. 1:15-34)

3. The public ministry of Christ (Joh. 1:35 - 12:50)

4. The private ministry of Christ to His disciples (Joh. 13-17)

5. The crucifixion of Christ (Joh. 18-19)

6. The resurrection of Christ (Joh. 20-21)

Theme and distinctive features

1. The emphasis of John is on the deity of Christ

   a. The plain statements tell us that Jesus is God (John 1:1; 14:9). The Jehovah's Witnesses translate John 1:1 as "the word was *a* god." This is impossible, for Isaiah says there is no other God (Isa. 44:8; 45:5, 6, 18, 21, 22; 46:9).

   b. Jesus is shown to have the attributes of God

      (1) Jesus is eternal (Joh. 1:2). Compare Col. 1:17; 1 Joh. 1:2; Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2.

      (2) Jesus is the creator of all things (Joh. 1:3). This verse tells us that Jesus could not have been the first creation, because it says that nothing was created without Him.

      (3) Jesus is omnipresent (Joh. 3:13).

(4) Jesus possesses the Holy Spirit in fulness (Joh. 3:34); Jesus has the entire fulness of divine life and wisdom and power, whereas man has these only in a small measure.

(5) Jesus is the judge of all (Joh. 5:22).

(6) Jesus is to be honored with the same honor as the Father (Joh. 5:23).

(7) Jesus speaks the words of eternal life (Joh. 6:63).

(8) Jesus is sinless and holy (Joh. 8:46).

(9) Jesus is omniscient (Joh. 10:15).

c. The "I Am" statements show Jesus is God (Joh. 8:58). Compare Ex. 3:14.

d. The reaction of the Jewish leaders show that Jesus was claiming to be God (Joh. 8:59; 5:17-18; 10:30-33)

e. The miracles prove that Jesus is God (Joh. 20:30-31; 5:36; 10:25, 37-38; 14:11; 15:24)

2. The key word in John is "believe." The Greek word "pisteuo" is used 107 times.

a. It does not mean merely to believe a fact.

b. It means to commit oneself to.

(1) "pisteuo" is translated "commit" (Joh. 2:24).

(2) "pisteuo" is translated "put in trust" (1 The. 2:4).

c. It is possible to believe in a wrong way (Joh. 2:23-25). The Jewish crowds believed in Jesus as a great prophet but not as the Messiah who would save them from their sins (Joh. 6:14-15, 26, 66).

d. To believe on Jesus Christ for salvation means the following:

(1) To receive Him (Joh. 1:12)

(2) To be sure that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (Joh. 6:66-69)

(3) To believe so that you continue in His Word (Joh. 8:31-32)

(4) To believe so that you follow Him (Joh. 10:27-28)

Some things not mentioned in John

1. The virgin birth
2. The temptation
3. The Sermon on the Mount
4. The transfiguration
5. Repentance
6. Parables
7. Hell
8. List of the 12 apostles
9. His agony at Gethsemane
10. His ascension to heaven

Some things found only in John

1. Jesus is identified as the Lamb of God (Joh. 1:29). This very important verse shows us that Jesus is the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament animal sacrifices. It is the key to understanding the Old Testament sacrificial system.

2. The first miracle at the wedding feast (Joh. 2:1-11).

   a. Verse 11 says this was Christ's first miracle. This means He did not do miracles when He was a child, as some false gospels claim.

   b. Jesus gave Mary a gentle rebuke, that in the realm of miracles He was subject only to the Father (Joh. 2:3-4).

   c. The pots held 20 or more gallons each. One firkin was about 7.5 gallons.

   d. Wine in the Bible is a generic term.

      (1) It can mean the natural juice of the grape (Prov. 3:10; Isa. 65:8).

      (2) It can mean man-made alcoholic wine. Alcohol is not a natural substance. It requires proper temperature, sugar, water content, etc. The process must be controlled. It is a man-made substance.

e. We believe that the wine Jesus made at the wedding was not alcoholic. (It is necessary to understand that the word wine in Greek is a generic term and can refer both to alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverage. The *American Tract Society Bible Dictionary* has a good study on that which can be found in the *Swordsearcher* Bible program.)

(1) It was unlawful for kings and priests to drink alcoholic wine, and Jesus was both (Prov. 31:4; Lev. 10:8-11).

(2) It is forbidden to give wine to others to make them drunk (Hab. 2:15).

(3) It is unwise for men to drink alcoholic wine (Prov. 20:1), and we know that Jesus, Wisdom incarnate, would not do anything unwise.

(4) Even if they had been drinking alcoholic wine earlier, the Scriptures forbade them to tarry long at it (Prov. 23:29-30), and had Jesus served them alcoholic wine at that juncture it would have been disobedience to God's law.

(5) This miracle proved that Jesus was the Messiah (Joh. 2:11), which means that Jesus did not do anything unholy or unwise in this circumstance. The apostles knew that the Messiah would be sinless and holy.

(6) We know that the Spirit of God would not have put anything in the Bible to encourage drunks, to cause men to offend in sin (Ro. 14:21; 1 Co. 10:32-33), but the idea that Jesus made alcoholic wine has done exactly that.

(7) When it comes to the issue of Christians drinking, the New Testament believer is to avoid the very appearance of evil (1 The. 5:22). Alcoholic beverages are a great evil in modern society. Consider the automobile wrecks, the ruined health and early graves, the adulteries, the lewdness, the divorces, the neglected children, the abused wives, the waste of money, the gambling, the blasphemy, the pure foolishness.

(8) It is also important to understand that there is a dramatic difference between the alcoholic content of wine today and that of Bible times. "Many wine-drinking Christians today mistakenly assume that what the New Testament meant by wine is identical to wine used today. This, however, is false. In fact, today's wine is by biblical definition strong drink, and hence is forbidden in the Bible. ... Even ancient pagans did not drink what some Christians drink today. ... To consume the amount of alcohol that is in two

martinis today, by drinking wine containing three parts water to one part wine (the biblical ratio) a person would have to drink over twenty-two glasses" (Norman Geisler and Robert Stein, *Focus in Missions*, Sept. 1986).

f. What about verse 10? This does not mean that the people were drunken. After we drink much of anything our ability to taste becomes less sensitive.

3. The first cleansing of the temple (Joh. 2:14-17). Jesus repeated this at the end of His ministry (Mt. 21:12-13).

4. The born again chapter (Joh. 3)

a. The situation (Joh. 3:1-2)

(1) Jesus had presented Himself as the Messiah and had done miracles proving His claim, but the people had merely believed on Him as a prophet and political saviour rather than the Son of God and Saviour from sin. See John 2:23-25; 6:14, 26, 40-42. The prophets had plainly taught that the Messiah would be God (Isaiah 9:6) and that He would make atonement for man's sin (Isaiah 53), but the Jews did not believe this.

(2) Nicodemus was of this crowd (Joh. 3:1-2).

He was a very educated and religious but unsaved man.

He considered Jesus a rabbi or great teacher only and not the Messiah.

He was afraid of his peers. The fear of man bringeth a snare (Prov. 29:25), and many will be in hell because they feared man more than God.

b. Jesus' first statement (Joh. 3:3)

(1) He emphasized the importance of His statement by prefacing it with "verily, verily." Repetition in the Bible is for emphasis. Nothing in life is more important than being saved.

(2) The new birth is necessary to see the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is His eternal rule (Psalm 145:13). It will be established on earth when Christ returns to set up the Davidic kingdom (Mt. 6:12; Mark 9:1; Luke 13:28-29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:18).

c. Nicodemus' confusion (Joh. 3:4)

He was thinking only in terms of the flesh. His religion focused on the externals and was oriented toward this world rather than toward the eternal things of God.

d. Jesus' answer (Joh. 3:5-8)

(1) He again emphasized the importance of this matter by repetition.

(2) He said a man must have two births in order to enter God's kingdom (Joh. 3:5-6). Water and Spirit are the two births. Water refers to the first or natural birth, and Spirit refers to the second or spiritual. This is clear in the context. See verse 6. Baptismal regenerationists insert baptism here, but when Jesus explained in this same passage how to be born again He didn't mention baptism. See John 3:14-18.

How does the new birth compare to the first birth?

Both are real events that happen at one certain time. Salvation is not a process.

Both are of God. Even though the first birth is a "natural process," the Bible teaches that God is the author of conception and life. Compare Psalm 139:13-16.

Both require seed. The seed for the new birth is the Word of God (Luke 8:10).

Both are dramatic events that can be seen by others. Salvation changes a person's life (2 Co. 5:17).

(3) Jesus tells Nicodemus that all Jews and all people must be born again (Joh. 3:7). "Ye" is plural. All have sinned and all must be born again. Note that Jesus did not say "we" but "ye." Jesus is the sinless Son of God and had no need of salvation.

(4) Jesus likens the new birth to the wind (Joh. 3:8).

We do not know where the wind comes from or how it operates, but we can see its effect. Likewise, we do not understand how a sinner is born again but we can see the change that it makes in his life.

The wind blows where it will. Likewise, the Spirit of God is in control of the new birth. He convicts and enlightens and draws and regenerates. The sinner's part is simply to respond.

e. Nicodemus' continued confusion (Joh. 3:9)

Nicodemus represents religion. It has no comprehension of true salvation and is confused by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

f. Jesus clarifies the issue and explains how to be born again (Joh. 3:10-18)

(1) He states His authority (Joh. 3:10-13). He came down from heaven and is in heaven! This is the mystery of the incarnation. The eternal Son of God became a man, but He never ceased to be God. He was still omnipresent (Joh. 3:13). This verse is corrupted in the modern versions by the omission of the words "which is in heaven."

(2) He likens salvation to the serpent in the wilderness (Joh. 3:14). Compare Numbers 21:4-9. (Why did God require that Moses make an image of a serpent? It signified the fact that Jesus would take our sin upon himself on the cross. God the Father forsook Jesus because He was bearing the sin of the world. See Isaiah 53:6; 2 Corinthians 5:21.)

The snake bite was like sin, which brings death (Ro. 6:23).

The brazen serpent had to be lifted up in order to become effective, which is a picture of Christ on the cross. Compare John 12:32-33.

The offer of healing was to be proclaimed to all. Compare Mark 16:15.

God's way of salvation seems foolish to the natural man, just as the brazen serpent must have seemed foolish to unbelieving Jews (Num. 21:5-9; 1 Co. 1:23).

While the healing was provided for all, it had to be individually appropriated. Compare John 1:12.

The dying Jews had to acknowledge their sin ("we have sinned," Num. 21:7) and look in faith at the brazen serpent. Compare Romans 10:9-13. An individual is born again by acknowledging his sinful condition before God and by believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on the cross for his sins (Joh. 3:14-16). Acknowledging one's sin and changing the mind about one's relationship with God is repentance.

Salvation is not difficult. The Israelites had only to look and believe. Even a child can be saved by believing on Christ.

There was no other effective remedy for the snake-bitten Jews, and there is only one way of salvation from sin. Compare John 3:18; Acts 4:12.

The healing was immediate, sure, and permanent, and the same is true for salvation in Christ. Compare Hebrews 10:14.

Salvation is the gift of a loving, compassionate God. In His mercy God provided a way of salvation for the Jews who were bitten by the snakes. Their punishment was fully deserved, but their salvation was of God's grace. Likewise, it is because of His great grace and mercy that God offers salvation to the world through Jesus (John 3:16). Grace is the unmerited and undeserved favor of God. Men deserve punishment, but they do not deserve salvation.

(3) Christ showed that salvation is through faith in Christ and His cross (Joh. 3:14-18).

Salvation is through Christ's death rather than through His life (Joh. 3:14). It is not enough to believe that Christ was a good man or even that He is God. I must believe that He died for my sin. This is the gospel. See 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

Salvation is for all men ("God so loved the world," "whosoever believeth," Joh. 3:16-17). Compare 1 Timothy 2:3-6.

Salvation is through believing (Joh. 3:15-18). The word "believe" is repeated 5 times in these verses.

- Saving faith is not mere mental assent, such as believing a historical fact. Compare James 2:19. Saving faith means to put one's trust in Christ, to rely upon Him, to come to Him and to know Him personally (John 6:35; 17:3).

- Saving faith must be in the right thing. Many professing Christians have faith in the wrong thing, such as baptism or the church or sacraments or Mary or their religious heritage or their sincerity or their goodness or their works.

- Saving faith is exclusive faith. It cannot be in Christ plus anything else. Many Hindus want to add Jesus to their other gods, but this is not saving faith.

- Saving faith is a repentant faith. Compare Luke 13:3, 5. The sinner must have a change of mind in regard to God and how he lives his life. He must surrender to God. Consider the idolaters at Thessalonica who "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 The. 1:9).

- Saving faith is trusting faith. It is like getting into a boat. To say that I believe that a boat will carry me to the opposite shore of a deep lake is not saving faith. Saving faith is actually getting into the boat.

(4) Christ taught that salvation is complete and sure (Joh. 3:15-18).

The sinner who trusts Christ in a saving manner will not perish, is given eternal life, and will not enter into God's condemnation. That sounds pretty safe and certain to me! Salvation is sure because it depends entirely upon Jesus Christ. He purchased it with His blood and death and offers it to the sinner as a gift.

5. The conversion of the woman at the well (Joh. 4:1-42)

a. Jesus was going back to Galilee and He passed through Samaria and the town of Sychar (Joh. 4:3-5). Sychar was formerly called Shechem (Gen. 33:19).

See Map 06 - *Israel in the Time of Christ*.

b. Samaria was a land of mixed religion (2 Ki. 17:6, 24-33).

c. It was about noon and Jesus was weary (Joh. 4:6). This shows the humanity of Christ.

d. Jesus loved all people and has taught us not to have prejudice against any (Joh. 4:7-9).

e. Jesus tells the woman of salvation (Joh. 4:10-14).

(1) It is a gift (Joh. 4:10).

(2) It is eternal (Joh. 4:14).

f. To receive this salvation, she must do three things:

(1) She must acknowledge her sinful, needy condition (Joh. 4:15-18).

(2) She must acknowledge that there is only one way of salvation (Joh. 4:20-24).

(3) She must acknowledge Jesus as the one true Messiah and Saviour (Joh. 4:25-26).

g. After the woman believed on Christ, she led many others to Jesus (Joh. 4:28-30, 39). This is a good evidence of salvation.

h. Jesus exhorted the disciples to be busy in the harvest.

(1) There are an endless number of souls to reach (Joh. 4:35).

(2) Those who work receive wages (Joh. 4:36).

(3) All those who join the work in any capacity receive wages (Joh. 4:37-38). For example, when William Carey became the first Baptist missionary to be sent out from England in 1793, many had a role in that enterprise. In 1791, one man gave Carey $50 so that he could publish his famous work, "Inquiry into the obligations of Christians to use means for the conversion of the heathen." Andrew Fuller went out and raised money to send out the missionaries. Twelve pastors joined together to form the first missionary society. John Thomas agreed to go to India along with Carey. The Northhamptonshire churches formed a monthly prayer meeting. All will receive their rewards.

i. Jesus responds to the will of the people.

(1) Here the people asked Him to stay and He stayed (Joh. 4:40-41).

(2) Contrast the people of the Gergesenes (Mt. 8:34 - 9:1).

6. The healing of the blind man at the pool (Joh. 5:1-14)

a. Some modern versions omit verse 4, but to do so makes verse 7 unintelligible.

b. Jesus healed the man immediately and completely (Joh. 5:8-9).

c. Jesus accepted men as they were but He commanded them to change their ways (v. 14). Compare Joh. 8:11.

7. Walking on the water (Joh. 6:15-21)

a. The disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee toward Capernaum

See Map 08 - *Christ's Early Travels 2*.

b. They were about 3.1 to 3.7 miles or 5 to 6 kilometers from land. (One furlong is about 200 meters, so 25 furlongs would be 5 kilometers and 30 would be 6 kilometers.)

c. There are three great evidences of Jesus' deity in this situation:

(1) Jesus saw them through the distance and the darkness and the storm. He is omniscient and sees all.

(2) Jesus shows His deity by walking on the water. Job said that God treads upon the waves (Job 9:8).

(3) When Jesus came into the boat, it was immediately on the other side of the lake (Joh. 6:21). They were only about half way across when Jesus approached them.

8. The sermon at Capernaum rebuking the people for not believing on Him as the Messiah (Joh. 6:24-71)

a. Jesus rebuked the people for merely seeking physical things and for neglecting the more important spiritual things (Joh. 6:26-27).

b. He teaches them the true way of salvation, which is not by works but by faith in Christ (Joh. 6:28-29).

c. At this point the crowds turned away from Christ (Joh. 6:66).

d. The testimony of true faith is spoken by Peter (Joh. 6:67-69).

9. The "I Am statements" (Joh. 6:35; 8:12; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 14:6)

a. These statements revealed Christ as God. Only God can make such boasts.

b. These statements reveal Christ as everything man needs: bread, light, the door to eternal life, the good shepherd, resurrection, the way, the truth, and the life

10. Jesus preaching at the Feast of Tabernacles (Joh. 7)

a. Jesus was in Galilee

b. His brothers did not yet believe in Him and they urged Him to go to Jerusalem and do miracles (Joh. 7:3-5). This teaches us that Mary was not a perpetual virgin, as Rome teaches.

c. Jesus said He was not going "yet" (Joh. 7:8). The word "yet" is omitted in some modern versions, but this creates an error, because Jesus did go later (v. 14).

d. Jesus gave the people a test whereby they can know the truth (Joh. 7:17). If a person is willing to obey God, He will show him the truth.

e. Jesus taught the people to judge according to the Word of God (Joh. 7:24).

(1) This verse is not saying that it does not matter how people dress or act.

(2) It is warning that we should not judge by our own thinking and standards, how things appear to me. The people were judging Jesus by their own thinking and traditions (Joh. 7:11, 23, 27).

(3) Jesus is teaching that we should judge things only by God's Word. If the people would have judged Jesus by God's Word, they would have known that He was the Messiah.

f. They could not do anything to Jesus until His time was come (Joh. 7:30).

g. Jesus offered living water to every man (Joh. 7:37).

(1) This offer was made in the context of the pouring out of water and quoting Isaiah 12:3. "The generally joyous character of this feast broke out on this day into loud jubilation, particularly at the solemn moment when the priest, as was done on every day of this festival, brought forth, in golden vessels, water from the stream of Siloah, which flowed under the temple-mountain, and solemnly poured it upon the altar. Then the words of Isa. 12:3 were sung, With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of Salvation, and thus the symbolical reference of this act, intimated in Joh. 7:39 was expressed" (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown).

(2) Jesus gave a universal offer of salvation. Anyone who is thirsty is invited to come.

(3) Jesus offered Himself as the satisfaction of man's deepest needs.

(4) Jesus was making the same offer as Jehovah made in Isaiah 55:1.

h. Jesus also prophesied the coming of the Holy Spirit (Joh. 7:37-39).

(1) The Holy Spirit is given to those who believe in Christ, not to those who seek the Spirit. We are never told to seek the Spirit or to pray to Him or to exalt Him. Compare Eph. 1:13-14.

(2) The Holy Spirit could not be given until Jesus was crucified and resurrected. In the Old Testament, the Rock had to be smitten before the water could flow out (Ex. 17:6).

i. The people did not know Jesus nor the Scriptures (Joh. 7:40-42).

(1) Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

(2) The prophecies said that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem and also from Galilee (Mt. 4:13-16; Isaiah 9:1-2).

11. The woman taken in adultery (Joh. 8:1-11)

a. The Jewish leaders were trying to catch Jesus in something illegal. They had failed the day before when they had attempted to have Jesus arrested (Joh. 7:32, 45-46).

b. Now they tried to get Jesus to say something against the Law of Moses. They referred to the law of Deu. 22:22.

c. Jesus did not say the law should be ignored, but He forced the Jews to see their own sin and guilt before God. That is the purpose of the law (Ro. 3:19-20).

(1) Perhaps He wrote the Ten Commandments upon the ground, reminding the Jews that they had broken some of them, because to break one law is to break all.

(2) Perhaps He wrote His own words from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:28), reminding the men that each of them had sinned before God, that keeping the law is not a matter of merely keeping the externals but is a matter of the heart as well.

d. Jesus instructed the woman to begin a new life.

(1) How could she possibly "go and sin no more"? The only way is that she be changed and have a new nature that loves God and His law. That is what being born again means.

(2) Jesus received sinners as they are and forgave them, but He sent them forth to be different and to live new lives.

12. Jesus called the Pharisees children of the devil (Joh. 8:31-59)

a. Verses 31-32 teach two things:

(1) Continuing in God's Word is the evidence of true faith.

(2) Continuing in God's Word is the way of sanctification. "The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible." "A dusty Bible means a dirty life."

b. The incredible pride of the Jewish nation is seen in verse 33.

(1) They had forgotten their bondage in Egypt for hundreds of years.

(2) They had forgotten their bondage to many pagan nations during the years of the Judges.

(3) They had forgotten their bondage to Assyria and then to Babylon.

(4) They had forgotten that they were even then under bondage to the Roman government!

c. Jesus told them that He was referring to the bondage to sin (Joh. 8:34).

d. Jesus plainly told them that they were the "children of the devil" (Joh. 8:44).

(1) This reminds us that all men are not children of God (Joh. 8:41-42).

(2) Only those who are born again through faith in Jesus Christ are children of God (Joh. 1:12).

e. Here we learn many things about the devil (Joh. 8:44).

(1) He is the father of the unsaved.

(2) He was a murderer from the beginning, referring to his murder of the human race through Adam and Eve. He lied saying, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4), but he knew that they would indeed die and that was his object.

(3) He fell from his first place. He "abode not in the truth." See Isaiah 14:12-14; Jude 6.

(4) He is a liar and the father of all lies.

13. The healing of the man born blind (Joh. 9:1-41)

a. We see that not all sickness and trouble comes because of our own sin. Sometimes it is simply that God will be glorified and His plan fulfilled (vv. 2-3).

b. The blind man is wiser than the Pharisees.

(1) When they said Jesus was a sinner, he replied that "one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (Joh. 9:24-25).

(2) When they again asked him how he was healed, he asked them if they wanted to be Christ's disciple (Joh. 9:26-27).

(3) When they said they did not know who Jesus is, he replied that it is amazing that a man could heal the blind and that they would not know him (Joh. 9:28-33).

c. Jesus found the man and revealed Himself as the Son of God (Joh. 9:35-38).

d. Jesus used this occasion to illustrate the danger of willful spiritual blindness (Joh. 9:39-41).

(1) Those who refuse to acknowledge that they are needy sinners but who think they are good and religious cannot be saved but remain blind and dead.

(2) Those who acknowledge that they are spiritually dead and sinful, can be saved.

14. Preaching on the Good Shepherd (Joh. 10)

a. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep (Joh. 10:11). This is a prophecy of His sacrifice in our stead.

b. The true sheep hear Christ's voice and follow Him (Joh. 10:27-28).

(1) This is the evidence of true salvation. True believers hear the Word of God and obey it.

(2) Those who do not follow Christ do not have eternal life.

c. Jesus claimed oneness and equality with Jehovah God (Joh. 10:29-33).

d. Jesus said the Scripture cannot be broken (Joh. 10:34-35).

(1) Jesus is quoting Psa. 82:6, which refers to kings and magistrates (Psa. 82:1-4). They are called gods in the sense that they rule over others.

(2) The Scripture cannot be broken means it is all true and if any part of it is not truth then it all falls. It is like a chain. If something is held up by a chain, not one link can be weak or everything will fall. This is a powerful testimony to the infallible inspiration of Holy Scripture. Those who cast doubt upon the Scripture are not following Jesus Christ.

15. Raising Lazarus from the dead (Joh. 11:1-46)

a. Jesus waited for four days before He came to Lazarus (Joh. 11:1-18).

(1) God often waits until the last minute and after to answer prayer.

(2) He wants us to see that we cannot do things in our own power.

(3) He also wants to test our faith.

b. Martha gave a powerful testimony of her faith in Jesus as the Son of God (Joh. 11:20-27). This is one of the great testimonies in the Gospels.

c. Jesus wept (Joh. 11:33-38).

(1) He had compassion upon them and sorrowed with them for Lazarus His friend. We, too, are to "weep with them that weep" (Ro. 12:15).

(2) He grieved for this sin-cursed world (Ro. 8:22).

(3) He was grieved for their unbelief (Joh. 11:37-38).

d. Jesus commanded Lazarus to come forth by the authority of His word (Joh. 11:39-44).

(1) Lazarus rose still bound in the grave clothes (Joh. 11:44).

(2) Those who stood by loosed him. This is a picture of the discipleship that must follow conversion. The new birth is a miracle that only God can accomplish, but after one is born again, he needs help from other believers in order to grow in Christ.

e. Instead of believing in Jesus, the Pharisees plotted even more to put Him to death (Joh. 11:46-53).

16. Jesus speaks many things to the disciples during the passover meal and on the way to Gethsemane (Joh. 14-16).

This section of John's Gospel is covered under the studies on Matthew.

17. Christ's high priestly prayer (Joh. 17)

This section of John's Gospel is covered under the studies on Matthew.

Summary

As a summary to the Gospels, we will list some of the things that are emphasized:

1. The four Gospels give four different divinely inspired portraits of Christ, depicting Him in His various offices.

2. Jesus Christ is the eternal God, the Creator, the Messiah of Israel, and the Saviour of the world, who came to earth to suffer and die for man's sins.

3. Jesus' great miracles prove that He was the promised Messiah.

4. To receive eternal life a sinner must be born again through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

5. The law was given to show men their sin and to prepare them to receive Christ as Saviour.

6. Jesus loves all men and desires to save them and invites them to come to Him, but men can reject Him.

7. All of the covenants and types and prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus.

8. The kingdom of God promised in the Old Testament has assumed a mystery form in this present age. The prophets did not foresee the church age. They saw the coming of the Messiah to suffer and to reign, but they did not see that there is a gap of time between these two things. During this gap, the king is away in a far country and citizens for the kingdom are gathered from all the nations.

9. During this mystery period, the truth will be the minority and error will spread rapidly.

10. The kingdom of God promised in the Old Testament is not directly fulfilled in the church. It is a literal, earthly kingdom that will be established when Christ returns.

11. Faith in God is one of the most important things in the Christian life. Jesus emphasized this repeatedly, praising those who exercised faith and reproving those who had a lack of faith.

12. Hypocrisy is one of the most damnable things in religion. It was the sin of the Pharisees, and it quickly destroys the truth when it arises in the churches. If a church is not populated by sincerely born again members, it will apostatize from the faith and will deteriorate into a dead religion.

13. Hell is real and we should warn men about it plainly as Jesus did.

14. To be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, one must continue in His Word and give his life wholly to fulfill His will.

15. The church's Great Commission is to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, to baptize those who believe, and to disciple them. This is the great work that every believer is to give his life for, and those who do, gather eternal fruit and receive great wages.

16. The church age believer is to be ready at all times for Christ's return, knowing that His coming will not be preceded by signs and will occur suddenly and unexpectedly.

Review Questions

The Time between the Testaments

1. How many years passed from the end of Malachi and the beginning of Matthew?

2. After the death of Alexander the Great, the Greek empire was divided into how many parts?

3. What Syrian king defiled the Jewish temple and was a forerunner of the Antichrist?

4. Who were the Maccabees?

5. What Roman general conquered Israel and made the nation a vassal of the Roman Empire?

6. In what year did this happen?

7. Who was the ruler of Judea at the birth of Christ?

8. What was the character of this ruler?

9. Who was the Herod who put John the Baptist to death?

10. The Pharisees claimed to love God's Word, but in practice they put their own _____ above the Scriptures.

11. What was the doctrine of the Sadducees?

Introduction to *the Four Gospels*

1. How does Matthew portray Jesus?

2. Matthew traces the genealogy of Jesus back to what man?

3. Matthew is aimed to what group of people?

4. How does Mark portray Jesus?

5. What is the key word of the gospel of Mark?

6. How does Luke portray Jesus?

7. Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus back to what man?

8. Luke is aimed to what group of people?

9. How does John portray Jesus?

10. Why is it so difficult to reconcile all of the Gospels and to make a chronological record of Christ's life?

11. In what passage did Jesus promise that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth?

12. How long was Christ's earthly life?

13. What verse tells us how old Jesus was when He started preaching?

Matthew Introduction and chapter 1

1. What was Matthew's occupation before Jesus called him?

2. What was his other name?

3. What does the name "Jesus" mean?

4. What does the name "Christ" mean?

5. What is the Hebrew word for "Christ"?

6. What did God say about King Jechonias (Coniah or Jehoiachin) in the Old Testament?

7. Matthew traces Jesus' genealogy through what son of David?

8. Luke traces Jesus through what son of David?

9. Who was a notable sinner in the lineage of Christ?

10. Where was Mary living when the angel announced Christ's birth?

11. In how many ways does Matthew emphasize Mary's virginity?

12. How can we know for sure that the Old Testament Messianic prophecies were written before Jesus was born?

Matthew 2

1. How many wise men were there, according to the Bible?

2. What three offerings did they bring to Jesus?

3. What did the three offerings signify?

4. Where was Jesus when the wise men arrived?

5. About how old was Jesus when the wise men came?

6. What does *Nazarene* mean?

7. What does *Nazarite* mean?

Matthew 3

1. What two Old Testament prophecies told of the coming of John the Baptist?

2. In what two ways did John prepare the way for the coming of Christ?

3. What does "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" mean?

4. What is the difference between "the kingdom of heaven" and "the kingdom of God"?

5. What was John's baptism of repentance?

6. In what verse did Paul preach doing works meet for repentance?

7. What is the baptism of fire?

8. Who are two prophets who prophesied about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire?

9. How was John the Baptist a transitional figure?

10. Did John the Baptist found the church?

11. In what place was Jesus baptized?

12. How old was Jesus when He was baptized?

13. What was the purpose of Jesus' baptism?

14. How do we know that Jesus was baptized by immersion?

15. How do we see the Trinity at Jesus' baptism?

Matthew 4

1. What are two verses that say Jesus had no sin?

2. Jesus was tempted in what three areas?

3. How did Jesus defeat the devil?

4. How does the devil quote Scripture?

5. What book and chapter says that God does not tempt us to sin?

6. What verse says that God will make a way to escape temptation?

7. What does "Galilee of the Gentiles" mean?

8. What prophet foretold of Jesus' ministry in Galilee?

9. What is the meaning of "the kingdom of heaven is at hand"?

10. Why did Jesus do miracles?

11. What verse says that faith comes by hearing God's Word?

12. What verse says it is wrong to seek after miracles?

13. What was Peter's original name?

14. What was "Peter" mean?

15. What is the difference between *Cephas* and *Petros (*or *Peter)*?

16. What does the name "Peter" mean?

17. What two apostles were named "Boanerges" by Jesus?

18. What is the meaning of "Boanerges"?

19. How many books of the New Testament did John write?

20. Did Jesus ever fail to heal someone?

21. What kinds of sickness could Jesus heal?

Matthew 5-7

1. To whom, largely, was the Sermon on the Mount addressed?

2. What is the six-fold purpose of this sermon?

3. What are two things in the sermon that will be fulfilled in Christ's kingdom?

4. What is the purpose of the law of Moses?

5. What are two New Testament passages (book and chapter) that teach the purpose of the law of Moses?

6. What is the requirement of the law of Moses?

7. How did Jesus show that the requirement of God's law is obedience from the heart?

8. What is the meaning of "poor in spirit"?

9. How can a person become "pure in heart"?

10. Who are the "peacemakers" of Christ's sermon?

11. What two metaphors did Christ use to describe the believer's testimony in this world?

12. In what two ways did Jesus fulfill the law and the prophets?

13. What is a jot?

14. What is a tittle?

15. How does Jesus' use of the terms "jot and tittle" prove that He did not use a Greek translation of the Old Testament?

16. What did Jesus mean when he said to pluck out the eye or cut off the hand that offends?

17. What one legitimate cause did Jesus give for divorce?

18. Did the law of Moses teach to love one's neighbor and to hate one's enemy?

19. What is the purpose of the Lord's Prayer?

20. What are two examples of vain repetition in prayer?

21. In what book and chapter did Jesus say, "This kind cometh not out but by prayer and fasting"?

22. How much did Paul fast?

23. What specific promise did Christ make about fasting in the Sermon on the Mount?

24. What is the "evil eye" in Matthew 6?

25. What did Christ mean when He said, "Take no thought for your life"?

26. What type of judgment did Christ forbid in Matthew 7:1?

27. What are some things we should judge, according to Scripture?

28. What is the royal law?

29. What is missing from the testimony of those that Jesus described in Matthew 7:21-23 who called Him "Lord, Lord" and said they had done many wonderful works?

Matthew 8-9

1. What was the purpose of Jesus' miracles?

2. What are two verses in John's Gospel that tell us why Jesus did miracles?

3. Did Jesus conduct healing crusades?

4. What are three characteristics of Christ's miracles?

5. How do we know that Isaiah 53:4 does not mean that Jesus died for our sicknesses?

6. What was a centurion?

7. What does "let the dead bury the dead" mean?

8. Why did Jesus call Himself the "son of man"?

9. Why is the Gadarenes also called the Gergesenes?

10. Why did the Jewish leaders charge Jesus with blasphemy in Capernaum?

11. What verse says that Jesus is separate from sinners?

12. How can we get more laborers for the Lord's harvest?

13. What passage teaches this?

Matthew 10

1. What are the names of the 12 apostles as given in Matthew?

2. What are two ways that the command given in Matthew 10 is different from the one given to believers today?

3. What are two reasons why we know that there are not apostles like the original 12 today?

4. What is the "prophetic perspective"?

5. What verse says that Jesus did not come to bring peace but a sword?

Matthew 11

1. How did Jesus prove to John the Baptist that He was the Messiah?

2. What does Matthew 11:12 mean that the violent take the kingdom of God by force?

3. How much did Jesus preach about hell? A little or lot?

4. Do miracles produce faith?

5. What are three kinds of spiritual light that men have?

6. What is a verse that says God wants all people to be saved?

7. In Matthew 11:28-30, whom does Jesus invite to come?

8. What are the two kinds of rest that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 11:28-30?

Matthew 12

1. What did Jesus mean when He said He is greater than the temple and the sabbath?

2. What is the sin against the Holy Spirit that is mentioned in Matthew 12?

3. How do we know that Jesus believed that the book of Jonah is true?

4. How do we know that Mary was not a "perpetual virgin"?

Matthew 13

1. What is a "mystery" in the New Testament?

2. What are the "mysteries of the kingdom"?

3. Did the Old Testament prophets see the church age?

4. What is the purpose of these parables?

5. What is the main meaning of the parable of the Sower?

6. What is the main meaning of the parable of the Tares?

7. What is the main meaning of the parable of the Mustard Seed?

8. What is the main meaning of the parable of the Hidden Leaven?

9. What is the main meaning of the parable of the Treasure Hid in a Field?

10. What is the main meaning of the parable of the Merchant Seeking Goodly Pearls?

11. What is the main meaning of the parable of the Net that Gathered Every Kind?

Matthew 14

1. Why were Herod and his wife angry with John the Baptist?

2. What was Herod doing when he ordered John to be killed?

3. How many people did Jesus feed in Mt. 14:15-21?

4. Why did Peter stop walking on the water?

5. Was there ever a time when someone brought a sick person to Jesus for healing and He was unable to do so?

Matthew 15

1. What are the five errors of the Pharisees?

2. What verse in Jeremiah says the heart is deceitful and wicked?

3. After salvation, is the old nature taken away from the believer?

4. What is the main lesson of the Canaanite woman?

5. How many people did Jesus feed in Mt. 15:32-29?

Matthew 16

1. Why was it wrong for the Pharisees to seek a sign from Jesus?

2. What did Jesus say about those who seek after signs?

3. What is the sign of Jonah?

4. Why could the disciples not understand Jesus' words?

5. Why did Jesus wait until chapter 16 before mentioning the church?

6. What are three reasons why we know that Peter is not the rock?

78. What are the "keys of the kingdom of heaven"?

Matthew 17

1. Peter was with Jesus on the mount and saw Jesus in His glory. Later Peter spoke of this in his epistles and he said that there is something that is more sure than miraculous experiences. What is more sure? In what passage did Peter say this?

2. Moses appeared with Jesus on the mount when He was glorified. What does this teach us about death?

3. In what way was John the Baptist Elijah? What verse explains this?

4. Why could the disciples not cast out the demon in Matthew 17?

5. What passage in Paul's writings says that the believer should pay taxes?

Matthew 18

1. How do we know that children can be saved?

2. What is the main work of angels?

3. What are the four steps for dealing with church members who have caused an offence?

4. Does Matthew 18 teach us how to deal with false teachers?

5. What did Jesus promise to churches that are required to exercise discipline against a member?

6. How many times did Jesus say we should forgive others?

Matthew 19

1. Jesus gave only one reason for divorce. What is that?

2. Why did God allow divorce in the Old Testament times?

3. How do we know that Jesus was teaching a very strong doctrine of divorce in Matthew 19?

4. What other passage in the New Testament teaches about divorce?

5. Why did Jesus quote the law to the rich young ruler in Matthew 19?

6. What passage in Paul's writings tells us the purpose of the law?

7. Why is it hard for a rich man to be saved?

Matthew 20

1. What is the main teaching of the parable of the householder?

2. What verse in the New Testament teaches that God is the Saviour of all men but He is also the Saviour of only those who believe?

3. What is required to be great in the kingdom of God?

4. What did the blind men cry out to Jesus in Matthew 20?

5. Why does Luke mention only one blind man?

Matthew 21

1. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, what prophecy did He fulfill?

2. Did Jesus ride upon the ass or upon the ass's colt?

3. What does Hosanna mean?

4. How many times did Jesus cast the money changers out of the temple?

5. What does this teach us?

6. What does the cursed fig tree teach about Israel?

7. What does the cursed fig tree teach us about false Christians?

8. In the parable of the two sons in Mt. 21:28-32, one son refused to obey the father but later repented. What does he represent?

9. The other son agreed to obey the father but he did not obey. What does he represent?

10. What is the main meaning of the parable of the vineyard?

Matthew 22

1. What is the main teaching of the parable of the wedding feast?

2. What is the meaning of the man who came without a wedding garment?

3. What does this statement mean? "many are called but few are chosen"

4. Who were the Herodians?

5. Why did they ask Jesus if it is lawful to pay tribute to Caesar?

6. Who were the Sadducees?

7. Jesus said the Sadducees erred in two ways. What are the two?

8. Jesus asked the Pharisees why the Messiah is called David's son and also David's Lord. What is the answer to that?

Matthew 23

1. Why is it wrong for Christian leaders to take titles such as "rabbi" and "father"?

2. What were some of the sins of the Pharisees that Jesus rebuked?

3. Why did Jesus rebuke the Pharisees for going across the seas to make converts?

4. What was the false gospel that the Pharisees taught?

5. Jesus said He would have received Israel but they rejected Him. What does this teach us about Calvinism?

6. According to Mt. 23:39, when will Jesus turn back to Israel?

Matthew 24

1. Why is this called the "Olivet discourse"?
2. What are two major reasons for interpreting this prophecy literally?

3. When will these events occur? How do you know?

4. What are the two parts to the tribulation period in Matthew 24?

5. Which prophecy in Daniel describes this period?

6. What is the first thing that Jesus warned about?

7. What is “the abomination of desolation” in Mt. 24:15?

8. What are four false christs today?

9. What did Jesus say about miracles at the end of the church age?

10. What is the gospel of the kingdom?

11. Who will preach the gospel of the kingdom during the Tribulation?

12. What percentage of Jews will be converted during the Tribulation?

13. What prophecy teaches this (book and chapter)?

14. What are three reasons why we know that Matthew 24 is not describing church-age saints on earth during the Tribulation?

15. What signs precede the rapture of church age believers?

16. What are two ways that these prophecies should motivate the believer?

Matthew 25

1. Who are the virgins of the parable of the virgins?

2. What are two reasons that we know that the foolish virgins are unsaved?

3. How do we know that the slothful servant in the parable of the talents is not a believer?

4. On what basis will Jesus judge the nations when He returns?

5. What are two reasons for your answer of the previous question?

6. What are two other judgments that are to come?

Matthew 26 The Upper Room

1. Why were the disciples slow to understand what Christ taught them about His death and resurrection?

2. When did the Pharisees determine to kill Jesus?

3. How many of the Jewish leaders were involved in this conspiracy?

4. On what three occasions was Jesus anointed?

5. Judas, who betrayed Jesus, was guilty of what sin before that?

6. How much was he paid to betray Jesus? This was the price of what in the Old Testament?

7. How did Jesus identify Judas at the Last Supper?

8. What did Jesus say about Judas' punishment?

9. What are three reasons how we know that the elements of the Lord's Supper are symbolic?

10. How do we know that non-alcoholic juice is to be used in the Lord's Supper?

11. What was Peter's sin?

12. What book and chapter describes Christ's washing of the disciples' feet?

13. On what occasion did this occur?

14. What was the purpose of the footwashing?

15. How do we know that this is not to be practiced as a church ordinance?

16. What are three ways that the believer can overcome fear and anxiety?

17. How did Christ describe heaven in John 14:1-3?

18. What are three other ways that heaven is described in the New Testament that teach us that it is a real place?

19. In what verse did Jesus say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life?"

20. What verse says that by Christ all things consist?

21. What verse says that Christ upholds all things by the word of His power?

22. What did Christ mean when He said that the disciples would do greater works?

23. What is the Greek word translated "Comforter" in John 14?

24. What is the meaning of this word?

25. How is this Greek word translated in 1 John 2:1?

26. How does Christ manifest Himself to the believer?

27. What did Christ mean when He said the Spirit was with the disciples and would be in them?

28. How many times in Scripture is the Spirit called "the Spirit of truth"?

29. What did Christ mean when He said the Spirit would teach all things?

Christ's Teaching on the Way to Gethsemane (John 15-16)

1. Which chapters of which Gospel contain the words of Christ's teaching on the way to Gethsemane?

2. In Christ's parable of the Vine, if a branch does not bear fruit, what does that mean?

3. What are three ways the branch abides in the Vine and bears fruit?

4. When and by whom was the evil world system created?

5. What verse says Satan is the god of this world?

6. What verse in this passage mentions all three members of the Trinity?

7. What is "the essence" of the Trinity?
8. How do we know from this passage that the Holy Spirit is a Person?

9. What is the Holy Spirit's special work?

10. How do we pray in relation to the Trinity?

11. What is the glory in which the Son dwelt with the Father before the world was?

12. What type of creatures did Isaiah see near God's throne?

13. Why did Jesus say that it was expedient for Him to go away to heaven?

14. The word "reprove" in John 16:8 is from the Greek "elegcho." What are two other ways this word is translated in English?

15. What must the believer do in order for the Holy Spirit to reprove the world?

16. What did Jesus mean when He said the Holy Spirit will reprove the world of sin? What sin?

17. Why do sinners need to be reproved of righteousness?

18. What verse says our righteousness is as filthy rags before God?

19. What verse says Christ was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him?

20. What verse says Christ has destroyed the devil?

21. How has the Holy Spirit led into all truth according to Christ's promise?

Christ's High Priestly Prayer (John 17)

1. What method of Bible interpretation must be used to support the doctrine of unconditional election?

2. What is a verse in John's Gospel that teaches that salvation is for "whosoever will"?

3. How is election like a door?

4. How does John 17:3 teach that Jesus is God?

5. How could Jesus say to the Father that He had finished the work He had been given when He had not yet died on the cross?

6. In this prayer, what one thing did Jesus pray for Himself?

7. In what sense did the Lord's disciples keep God's Word?

8. How is God's Word preserved by its reception?

9. Why did Christ say that He did not pray for the world?

10. What verse says the unbeliever is without Christ in the world and has no hope?

11. In what sense is the believer not of the world?

12. What verse says the believer is an ambassador of Christ to preach the gospel?

13. How did Christ sanctify Himself?

14. In what verse did Christ say, "He that heareth you heareth me"?

15. What book and chapter says that we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish?

16. How does the ecumenical movement misuse John 17:21?

17. What are two ways that the true unity of believers witnesses to the world?

18. How does God's righteousness guarantee the foundation of His eternal kingdom?

19. How does Christ end His high priestly prayer?

Matthew 26 Gethsemane

1. Where was the garden of Gethsemane?

2. What is the meaning of "Gethsemane"?

3. What are two possible meanings of "the cup" that Jesus prayed about?

4. How did Jesus exhort the disciples in Gethsemane?

5. About how many soldiers were in a Roman legion?

6. What Psalm describes Judas' betrayal?

Matthew 26-27 Christ's Trial and Crucifixion

1. Why was Jesus first sent to Annas, though he wasn't high priest?

2. What relation was Annas to Caiaphas?

3. What are three ways that Christ's trial was a mockery of justice?

4. What prophecy said that Christ would be taken from judgment?

5. What prophecy described Christ being smitten and spit upon?

6. What two prophecies did Christ quote when He said "hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power"? (book and chapter)

7. What brought Peter to repentance?

8. How do we know that Judas did not have true repentance?

9. What is the answer to the seeming contradiction between the accounts of Judas' death in Matthew and Acts?

10. Why did the Jews send Jesus to Pontius Pilate?

11. What was Pilate's religion?

12. Whom did Pilate honor more than God?

13. The Herod before whom Christ appeared was what relationship to Herod the Great who tried to kill Jesus when He was a baby?

14. Who begged Pilate not to condemn Jesus?

15. Who did the people choose to be released instead of Jesus?

16. What three crimes was this man guilty of?

17. Why is it not possible to wash one's hands of Jesus?

18. According to tradition, how did Pilate's life end?

19. Who carried Christ's cross to Calvary?

20. What Gospel says that Mary met Jesus on the way to the cross?

21. What is the meaning of *Golgotha*? What language is this?

22. What was the name of this place in Greek?

23. Where was Golgotha located?

24. What time was Jesus crucified in Roman time and in modern time?

25. What are the two greatest prophecies about Christ's crucifixion? (book and chapter)

26. What are five of the Old Testament prophecies about Christ's death?

27. What did Jesus promise to the thief on the cross?

28. The darkness lasted from what time to what time?

29. What verse says no man hath power over his spirit in the day of death?

30. What were the last two things that Jesus said on the cross?

31. What veil was torn in the Temple when Christ died?

32. What was the significance of this?

33. Which of Jesus' male disciples was at the cross?

34. What prophecy said that Jesus would be buried with the rich? (book and chapter)

35. What two men took Jesus' body from the cross and prepared it for burial?

36. Who provided the tomb for Jesus' body?

37. How did they close the tomb?

38. What women first came to Christ's empty tomb?

39. Why do we say that Jesus did not die on Friday?

Matthew 28

1. What are three evidences of Christ's resurrection?

2. How does the empty tomb prove that Christ rose from the dead?

3. What are the three parts to the Great Commission?

4. How do we see the Trinity in the Great Commission?

5. How do we know that baptism is important?

6. How do we know that Mark 16:15 does not teach that baptism saves people?

7. What verse says repentance is part of the Great Commission?

8. What verse says the Holy Spirit came to enable us to do the work of the Great Commission?

Mark

1. List three things about John Mark, the author of this Gospel.

2. How does Mark portray Jesus?

3. What is the key word of Mark's Gospel?

4. What is the key verse of Mark's Gospel?

5. What is the difference between "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven"?

6. What passage includes both of these in two connected verses?

7. List one passage in the Gospels that tells us that the kingdom of God is yet future.

8. List one verse in the Epistles that tells us that the kingdom of God is yet future.

9. What are ideas about what the "worm" is in Mark 9:44?

10. Why did Jesus say He did not know the hour of His coming?

11. If someone says that baptism is necessary for salvation, what are three things that you would tell them?

12. What is the purpose of baptism?

13. Why do we know that Mark 16:9-20 should not be omitted?

Luke

1. List two things about Luke.

2. How do we know that Luke claimed divine inspiration for his Gospel?

3. How does Luke portray Jesus?

4. Luke traces the family of Jesus back to what man?

5. What does it mean to hate one's father, mother, wife, etc?

6. How do we know that the story of the rich man and Lazarus is not a parable?

7. What are five things that this story teaches us about hell?

8. What does this story teach us about death?

9. What was a publican? Why were they hated?

10. What is the evidence that Zacchaeus got saved?

11. What Old Testament passage tells us about the beginning of the mixed religion in Samaria?

12. What is the main lesson of the parable of the Good Samaritan?

13. When the lawyer asked Jesus how to have eternal life, why did Jesus tell him to keep the law?

14. What is the main lesson of the parable of the Lost Sheep?

John 1-7

1. What did John call himself in this Gospel?

2. How does John portray Jesus?

3. John tells us that Jesus has the attributes of God. What are four of these?

4. Why did Jesus say that He is the "I Am"?

5. What is the key word in John?

6. What are three ways that the Greek word "pisteuo" is translated?

7. Why does John 2:23-25 say that Jesus did not commit Himself to those who believed?

8. What was Jesus' first miracle?

9. What are three reasons why we believe Jesus did not make alcoholic wine?

10. Jesus said man must be born by the Spirit and the water. What is the water?

11. Why was the woman at the well surprised that Jesus talked with her?

12. Why did Jesus mention the woman's many marriages and fornications?

13. Why did the crowds turn away from Jesus in John 6?

14. How do we know that we should not pray to the Holy Spirit?

15. How does a person receive the Holy Spirit?

16. According to John 7:17, how can one know the truth?

John 8-21

1. According to John 8:31-32, how can one know the truth?

2. In what verse did Jesus tell the Pharisees that they were children of the devil?

3. According to John 10:27, what are two evidences of salvation?

4. When Jesus said the Scripture cannot be broken, what did He mean?

5. Why did Jesus wash the disciples' feet?

6. What are the two different washings that Jesus spoke of?

7. How do we know that foot washing is not a church ordinance?

8. What verse says that the Holy Spirit would bring things to the remembrance of the apostles?

9. How do we know that the Holy Spirit cares about sound doctrine?

10. How is God the Father greater than the Son?

11. What are five types of fruit in the believer's life?

12. Who are the elect?

13. To whom did Jesus appear first after His resurrection?

14. What verse says that the resurrected Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at one time?

15. To whom did Jesus appear last after His resurrection?