

# A WALK THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

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

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

## WHY SHOULD I WANT TO KNOW THE BIBLE

The bible is designed to help me

### THE BIBLE IS A HISTORY BOOK

The bible is historically correct. We can believe what it says.

### THE BIBLE IS A HOW-TO BOOK

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

### THE BIBLE IS A ROAD MAP

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

The bible will lead us the right way.

### THE BIBLE IS A WARNING SIGN

The bible will warn us of danger ahead and tell us how to avoid disaster.

### THE BIBLE IS A BURIED TREASURE

The bible is like a buried treasure. We need to dig into it every day.

### THE BIBLE IS DAILY FOOD

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

We need to learn how to feed ourselves. We need more than what we get at church.

### THE BIBLE IS A SWORD

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

Jesus used the word of God to defeat the devil when he attacked him.

### THE BIBLE IS A LOVE LETTER

The bible is like a love letter that is written just for you. It helps us get closer to God.

### THE BIBLE IS AN IOU

The bible is full of God's promises. If he says it, we can trust him.

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

We can't use it if we don't know it

**WE NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS BOOK**

The sad thing about it, most people don't see the need to know the bible.  
They fail to see the damage that is caused by neglecting the word.

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

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

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

**WE NEED TO KNOW THE BIBLE IN ORDER TO GROW**

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

**WE NEED TO KNOW THE BIBLE IN ORDER TO HAVE JOY**

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

**WE NEED THIS BOOK IN ORDER TO OVERCOME SIN**

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

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

**WE NEED THIS BOOK IN ORDER TO GET DIRECTION**

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

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

You may think you don't have time to study but a few minutes a day can do wonders.

Of course, the more time we spend in the bible the more help we will receive.

The bible consists of 66 different books.

Originally the Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew.

The New Testament was written in Greek.

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

The “foundational” books teach what God demands.

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

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

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

Matthew 22:24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

JESUS REFERRED TO THE OLD TESTAMENT SEVERAL TIMES.

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

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

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

Luke 16:31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

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

### **NEW TESTAMENT** (27 books)

GOSPELS	HISTORY	PAUL’S LETTERS	GENERAL LETTERS	PROPHECY
MATTHEW	ACTS	ROMANS	HEBREWS	REVELATION
MARK		1 CORINTHIANS	JAMES	
LUKE		2 CORINTHIANS	1 PETER	
JOHN		GALATIANS	2 PETER	
		EPHESIANS	1 JOHN	
		PHILIPPIANS	2 JOHN	
		COLOSSIANS	3 JOHN	
		1 THESSALONIANS	JUDE	
		2 THESSALONIANS		
		1 TIMOTHY		
		2 TIMOTHY		
		TITUS		
		PHILEMON		

## **FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OF SILENCE BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS**

The Old Testament closes with Israel being a divided nation.

Ten tribes that were known as ISRAEL and two tribes were known as JUDAH.

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

For four hundred years, there is no word from God.

Finally, the silence is broken, God speaks again.

## **THE RELIGIOUS STATE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

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

### **THE RELIGIOUS GROUPS**

#### **THE SADDUCEES**

The Sadducees were Jewish but they had strange beliefs.

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

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

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

They did not believe in reward or punishment after death.

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

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

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

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

#### **THE PHARISEES**

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

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

They were totally devoted to the Old Testament Law.

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

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

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

#### **THE SANHEDRIN**

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

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

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

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

## THE PRIESTS, LEVITES, HIGH PRIEST AND CHIEF PRIESTS

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

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

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

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

## SCRIBES

This group were teachers of the Old Testament.

They copied documents.

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

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

## RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

### SYNAGOGUE

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

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

The Jews traveled to Jerusalem to worship three times a year. As far as their daily worship, they relied on the synagogues.

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

The synagogues functioned by donations given by those who attended.

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

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

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

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

## THE GOSPELS

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

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

The first three gospels are called the Synoptic Gospels. The word synoptic means, "the same view". In other words, the first three gospel accounts are very similar.

These three books include many of the same stories and very similar wording.

This does not mean the gospel account of John is incorrect. It simply means John wrote of events that were not included in Matthew, Mark or Luke. John tells us more about Jesus' Galilean ministry, the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus' farewell speech and many other events.

The gospels do not give us every detail of the life of Christ. We are told almost nothing about the first twelve years of his life.

John has a word to say about this. He said if everything Jesus did had been written down, the entire world would not be able to contain the books that would be written (Jn. 21:25).

## THE GOSPELS VIEW OF JESUS

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

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

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

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

# THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Matthew was a Jewish believer. Before his conversion he had been a tax collector (Mt. 9:9).

In Jesus' day, Rome was in control. The Jews hated tax collectors (also called publicans). Any Jew that became a tax collector was considered a traitor by the Jews.

Many of the tax collectors were thieves. They would demand more money than was owed, and would keep the rest for themselves.

Matthew was one of the twelve disciples of the Lord. Jesus knew Matthew's past life, forgave him, and chose him as one of his disciples. What a display of God's grace.

When the disciples are listed, his name always comes first.

He is also known as Levi (Mk. 2:14, Lk. 5:27).

Matthew includes information about the Lord that the other gospel accounts do not contain.

It seems obvious that Matthew wrote primarily to the Jew.

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

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

- He does not explain Jewish customs.

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

- He refers to the Old Testament quite often.

Matthew quotes the Old Testament about fifty times. He alludes to the Old Testament about seventy-five times. For the Jew, this was vitally important. They had to be convinced that Jesus was the one the Old Testament spoke of.

- He uses the term "kingdom of heaven" instead of "kingdom of God".

The Jews honored God highly. They were reluctant to even utter the name of God.

- Only Matthew records Jesus' words, "I am not but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel"
- He uses the term, "son of David" more than the other gospel writers.

The Jews held David in high esteem. They were expecting the son of David to come.

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

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

Even though this book is clearly a Jewish book, we find it ending with the Lord calling his disciples to go and tell the world.

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

Matthew gives the lineage of Jesus through his legal father, Joseph (1:16). The Jews were very concerned about family records, and rightfully so. For a man to be a king he must have a genealogy. He must prove he is in the line of royalty.

If Jesus was to be the King of the Jews, his genealogy had to be proven. He was the one the Old Testament predicted would come. He was of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David. This proved Jesus' right to sit upon the throne of David.

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

Jesus was "the son of David". Jesus is referred to as "the son of David" ten times in the book of Matthew. God promised David one from his family would sit upon the throne in Jerusalem. David's kingdom would have no end.

2 Sa 7:13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

2 Sa 7:16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

Jesus was "the son of Abraham". God promised Abraham one from his family would bless all the earth.

Ge 22:18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Jesus was this promised one of the lineage of Abraham.

JESUS' GENEALOGY THROUGH HIS STEP FATHER, JOSEPH

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

The "begats" end in verse 16 where it reads, "Joseph the husband of Mary, OF WHOM WAS BORN JESUS, who is called Christ."

The Holy Spirit was careful to make sure we understand Joseph was not the father of Jesus.

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

#### THE KING'S MANGER 1:18 – 2:23

Matthew explains the birth of Jesus. He was born of a virgin. What a miracle.

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

JOSEPH WAS ESPOUSED TO A VIRGIN 1:18-19

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

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

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

Two, the betrothal period. This began with a legal ceremony in which the bride and groom became bound to each other. The betrothal period lasted a year. The couple was considered to be husband and wife, even though they were not living together and had not come together sexually. It took divorce for this contract to be broken.

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

The Jewish betrothal period was for one year. The betrothal period was as binding as our modern marriages. The couple was considered husband and wife even though they were not living together and the marriage had not been sexual activity. A divorce was required if the betrothal was terminated (De. 24:1).

JOSEPH FINDS OUT MARY IS EXPECTING A BABY

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



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

#### AN ANGEL VISITS JOSEPH 1:20-23

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

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

The Holy Spirit had produced the child in the womb of Mary. The child's name would be Jesus. The name Jesus, means "Savior".

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

Jesus would indeed save his people from their sin. He came to "his people" (the Jews) first.

Jesus would say, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Mt. 15:24).

Paul said the gospel was to the Jew first (Rom. 1:16). Thank the Lord; the gospel message didn't stop with the Jews. God opened the way to the Gentiles.

Jesus would die for the world. His death provided a means whereby anyone could be forgiven from their sin.

These things were happening as the Old Testament had foretold.

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

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

Jesus was the promised one. Below are just a few of the Old Testament prophecies Jesus fulfilled.

As you read through these, notice especially those that Jesus would have no control over. He had no control over where he was born of a virgin. He had no control over where he was born. That is, unless he was who he claimed to be. He claimed to be and he was God

#### A FEW OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES FULFILLED BY JESUS

He was born of a virgin Gen. 3:15 fulfilled in Mt. 1:20  
He was born in Bethlehem Micah 5:2 fulfilled in Mt. 2:1  
He was born of a virgin Isa. 7:14 fulfilled in Mt. 1:22-23  
He was called Immanuel Isa. 7:14 fulfilled in Mt. 1:23  
He was of the lineage of Abraham Gen. 12:3 fulfilled in Mt. 1:2  
He was from the lineage of David Isa. 9:7 fulfilled in Lk. 1:32-33  
He came from the tribe of Judah Gen. 49:10 fulfilled in Lk. 3:33  
He came out of Egypt Hos. 11:1 fulfilled in Mt. 1:23  
Bitterness and weeping a part of his birth Jer. 31:15 fulfilled in Mt. 2:16-18  
A forerunner would come before him Isa. 40:3-5 fulfilled in Lk. 3:4  
He was rejected by his people Isa. 53:3 fulfilled in Jn. 1:11  
He was declared to be the Son of God Ps. 2:7 fulfilled in Mt. 3:16-17  
He spoke in parables Isa. 6:9-10 fulfilled in Mt. 13:10-15  
Little children praised him Ps. 8:2 fulfilled in Mt. 21:16  
He was a sacrifice for sin Isa. 53:5-12 fulfilled in Rom. 5:6-8  
He was betrayed Zech. 11:12-13 fulfilled in Mt. 26:14-16  
The price of his betrayal bought a potter's field Zech. 11:12-13 fulfilled in Mt. 27:9-10  
He was falsely accused Ps. 35:11 fulfilled in Mk. 14:57-58  
He was silent before his accusers Isa. 53:7 fulfilled in Mk. 15:4-5  
He was spat on Isa. 50:6 fulfilled in Mt. 26:67  
He was smitten Isa. 50:6 fulfilled in Mt. 26:67  
His beard was pulled out Isa. 50:6 fulfilled in Mt. 26:67  
They gave him vinegar Ps. 69:21 fulfilled in Mt. 27:34  
His hands and feet were pierced Zech. 12:10 fulfilled in Jn. 20:25-27  
He was mocked Ps. 22:7-8 fulfilled in Lk. 23:35

Soldiers gambled for his garments Ps. 22:18 fulfilled in Mt. 27:35-36  
His bones were not broken Ps. 34:20 fulfilled in Jn. 19:33-36  
He was forsaken by God Ps. 22:1 fulfilled in Mt. 27:46  
He prayed for his enemies Ps. 109:4 fulfilled in Lk. 23:34  
Soldiers pierced his side Zech. 12:10 fulfilled in Jn. 19:34  
He was buried with the rich Isa. 53:9 fulfilled in Mt. 27:57-60  
He rose from the dead Ps. 16:10 and 49:15 fulfilled in Mt. 28:2-7  
He ascended to heaven Ps. 24:7-10 fulfilled in Mk.16:19 and Lk. 24:51  
He sat down at his Father's right hand Ps. 68:18 and 110:1 fulfilled in Mt. 22:44

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

Jesus was born of a virgin.

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

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

Verse 23 says, "*they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us*". Jesus was God. He is as much God, as God the Father.

John also tells us Jesus was God in flesh. He speaks about the "Word was God".

Jn 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John tells us the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Jn 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...

There is no doubt about it, Jesus was God in flesh.

JOSEPH DID AS THE ANGEL INSTRUCTED 1:24-25

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

Joseph did as he was instructed by the angel. Joseph's actions reveal his faith. He believed what God said.

Joseph and Mary did not come together until Jesus was born.

Some say Jesus was virgin conceived but not virgin born. In other words, they say Mary and Joseph had sex after Jesus' conception but before his birth. Scripture makes it clear, this is not so.

Some teach Mary remained a virgin her entire life. However, the verse above refutes that. In fact, the bible teaches Mary had other children. We read on more than one occasion about the brethren of Jesus.

Mt 12:46 While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

Mt 13:55 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

Ac 1:14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

1 Co 9:5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?

In Matthew 1:25, Jesus is called the "firstborn" son. This expression was used by the Jews only when there was more than one child.

JESUS IS BORN 2:1

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

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

## HEROD SEARCHES FOR JESUS Chapter 2

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

### WISE MEN COME SEEKING JESUS 2:1-12

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

Matthew is the only gospel that mentions the wise men. We do not know how many were in this group. The tradition of three wise men comes from the number of presents they brought but cannot determine their number.

The wise men were from "the east". That means they traveled 800 to 900 miles to see Jesus.

They probably were aware of the writings of Daniel since he spent time in Babylon and told about a Messiah who would come (Dan. 9:25-27).

The Greek word translated "wise" means "magi". They were men who studied signs and astronomy.

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

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

Judea, the area where Jesus was born, was a province of the Roman empire. Therefore, it was under the rule of the Roman government.

King Herod was the king that Rome had placed over Judea. He was a power hungry man. He was married ten times and had 15 children. He killed several of the Sanhedrin, his wife Mariamne, his mother, his brother in law, and at least three of his own sons. If he suspected anyone of trying to take his throne, they would certainly face his wrath. A common saying of that day was, "it is better to be Herod's swine than his son".

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

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

The wise men asked where the "King of the Jews" would be born.

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

This tells us why wise men came seeking the child. They had seen a star that led them to his birth place.

The wise men had come to worship this child. That upset Herod. He saw anyone claiming to be king, as a threat to his rule.

Herod and all of Jerusalem were troubled at the news of this child being born.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The words, “young child” tell us Jesus was not an infant. The wise men did not come to Jesus at his birth (as many Christmas plays suggest). The wise men sought and found Jesus when he was a “young child”. They found him in a house and not a stable.

As they were leaving Herod, the star appeared again and led them directly to Jesus.

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

The star hovered directly over the place where Jesus was. This could not have been a meteor as some have implied. I believe it was a supernatural event, orchestrated by the God of heaven.

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

They go into the house and see Jesus for themselves. The natural reaction was worship.

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

They gave gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts had eternal meaning behind them.

The gold was a gift that spoke of his royalty and kingdom.

The frankincense was a gift that spoke of his priesthood.

The myrrh was a gift that spoke of his death.

It’s amazing how this small baby has already caused such an uproar. He hasn’t uttered a word, taken a step, performed a miracle, he hasn’t taken a stand for truth, but his life is already making an impact.

## THE WISE MEN GO HOME A DIFFERENT WAY 2:12

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

God warned the wise men and told them to go home by a different way.

Thank the Lord for his protection of those who are willing to listen to him.

## JOSEPH TAKES HIS FAMILY TO EGYPT 2:13-15

God warned Joseph about Herod and told him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt.

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

Joseph was to stay in Egypt until God told him to leave.

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

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



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

God saw them safely into the land of Egypt where they remained until Herod died.

God could have stopped Herod from attacking his Son, but he chose not to. He chose to protect Joseph, Mary and Jesus by taking them out of harm's way. There are times when he will use ordinary means to accomplish what he desires. It is no less a miracle.

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

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

Herod was angry when he realized the wise men had disobeyed his instructions. Herod's anger was not to be taken lightly.

He was angry because the wise men had the audacity to ignore his demands, and because this "king" had escaped his hands.

No doubt, he had planned to kill Jesus, but now he would have to revise his plan. He was going to make certain this child never sat on any throne. He had all the male children in and around Bethlehem, from two years old and under put to death.

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

This act reveals the horror of sin. The anger, hatred and selfishness of Herod reveal how bad man can be. So many innocent babies, so many parents in anguish, so many lives never lived, all because of one man's hunger for power.

All of these events had been prophesied by Jeremiah. God had warned about this before it happened.

This heartbreaking event cannot be overstated. There is one positive fact about this tragedy, these children may have never been able to live for Jesus, but they were able to die for him. What an honor.

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

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

**HEROD DIES, JOSEPH, MARY AND JESUS RETURN TO ISRAEL 2:19-21**

When Herod died, the Lord spoke to Joseph in a dream and told him to go back to the land of Israel.

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

Herod died at seventy five years of age in the year 4 AD.

Joseph obeyed.

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

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

When Joseph heard that Herod's son, Archelaus was reigning in the place of his father, he was frightened.

Joseph had good reason to be fear Archelaus. Archelaus was a violent man. He was as cruel as his father.

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

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

Joseph brought Mary and Jesus to Nazareth.

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

Nazareth was the home town of Mary and probably of Joseph (Lk. 1:26-27).

Nazareth had a bad reputation. Nathaniel asked whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth (Jn. 1:46). To be a Nazarene was something that would be held as a reproach.

And yet, God chose to have his son born in this despised place. Jesus was born on the wrong side of the tracks.

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



## JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS FROM THE PRIESTLY LINEAGE

John was born of Zacharias (a priest) and his wife Elisabeth. Zacharias was a priest and Elisabeth came from the lineage of Aaron (Lk. 1:5).

Elisabeth was the cousin of Mary, the mother of Jesus (Lk.1:36). So, humanly speaking, Jesus and John were second cousins.

John was a simple man with simple interests. He wore clothing made of camel hair and ate locusts and wild honey. To say the least, when he came to town, he stirred things up.

John was called "The Baptist" because he baptized those who repented of their sin.

John did baptize, but he did much more. He was called by God to preach the message of the coming kingdom (Lk.1:80). He was actually the first prophet since Malachi.

## JOHN WAS A FORERUNNER FOR JESUS CHRIST

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

## JOHN WAS NAZARITE

John was a Nazarite from his birth (Lk.1:15).

The Nazarite vow was a promise a man or woman made in which they dedicated themselves to the Lord.

The word Nazarite means "to be set apart". It speaks of being set apart from the world and unto the Lord and his service. The vow could be for life or for a determined period of time.

We first learn of the Nazarite vow in the book of Numbers.

Nu 6:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate *themselves* to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate *themselves* unto the LORD:

The Nazarite vow consisted of three things.

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

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

TWO... they were forbidden to cut their hair. Nu 6:5

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

THREE... they were to not touch or come close to any dead body even if a parent or sibling dies. Nu 6:6-7

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

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

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

The coming of John the Baptist said much.

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

## JOHN WAS THE LAST OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET

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

### JOHN'S MESSAGE

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

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

John's message was, "repent". He came into a world full of sin. Also, he came into a religious world that was in darkness. The answer to both....repent.

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

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

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

- Repentance implies a change of mind.

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

A drunk may wake up feeling horrible because of his drinking the night before. Because of how bad he feels, he may change his actions for a while. But, he did not repent. His mind was not changed about his sin. He merely got tired of the results of his sin. He did not see his actions as sin against a holy God. He did not confess his sin and turn from it. He did not repent.

Repentance is when that man wakes up, sees his actions as sin against God, confesses his sin and turns his life over to the Lord. He has "changed his mind" about his sin. It is no longer just something that may make him feel bad occasionally, he sees as a violation of the law of God.

- Repentance implies a change of actions

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

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

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

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

John's message dealt with the coming of the Lord. He spoke of the Messiah Israel had been waiting for.

John's clothing was of camel hair. The hair of a camel was used to fashion a rough, coarse cloth. He did not come to impress. He came as God's spokesman.

He wore a leather girdle, the attire of Elijah (1 Kgs. 1:8).

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

His food was the food of the poorest of people. He ate locusts and wild honey.

The words, "kingdom of heaven" is a term found in only Matthew. Matthew may have used the word "heaven" in the place of "God" in an attempt to not offend his Jewish readers. The Jews considered it blasphemy to refer to God by name. They were careful when speaking or writing the word "God".

The rest of Scripture uses the term, "kingdom of God". Both terms speak of God's dominion over those who belong to Him. This kingdom is manifested at present by God's rule over believers. Jesus made mention of this in the book of Luke 17:21, where he said, "behold, the kingdom of God is within you".

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

No doubt about it, John drew a crowd. John's message was new to those who were listening.

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

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

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



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

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

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

The word baptize means to "immerse". John did not sprinkle.

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

John's message was not accepted by all those who heard him. The Pharisees and Sadducees came to hear him. No doubt, they were shocked with his message to them. He called them a bunch of snakes and warned them about coming judgment.

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

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

John told the Pharisees and Sadducees to bring fruit or their repentance. He was simply asking them to show proof of real repentance.

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

Repentance and faith are connected in Scripture. Repentance is turning from sin, and faith is turning to God. Both are vital, and neither can be excluded if a person wants to get right with God.

We find these two connected throughout the Word. The following are just a few examples.

Mk 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Ac 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Ac 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

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

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

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

John's message was a message of coming judgment to those who refuse to repent. He used the symbol of a tree being cut down. It is cut down at the roots, implying it will never grow again. The tree was not merely trimmed; it is cut to the root.

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

The picture is that of a gardener who examines his trees. Those that bear fruit, he takes care of. Those that bear no fruit, he cuts down and throws in a fire.

Some have said this speaks of Israel. They suggest John is speaking of how God is coming to examine them. If they refuse to repent, He will deal severely with them. I understand this point of view, but the words, “trees” and “every tree” makes me think this is speaking of individuals.

Those who hear John’s message are being examined by the gardener of the universe. He will have no mercy on the tree that bares no fruit. After all, fruit is the whole purpose of the tree.

That which determines whether the tree will be cut down or allowed to live, is fruit. If there is no fruit, the tree is cut down and cast into the fire.

Those who believe and repent WILL show forth fruit. All true believers bear fruit. True salvation brings about a changed life and a different lifestyle.

If there is no change, there is no salvation.

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

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

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

John speaks of the power and purity of Jesus. He said the one coming after him was “mightier” (his power) than he.

He said he was not worthy to carry the sandals of the one to come (his purity).

John saw himself as one of those he preached to; he also needed to one who was coming.

Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost.

One place we see this fulfilled is in Acts 1 and 2.

Ac 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Ac 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost speaks of the new birth experience. Every believer receives the baptism of the Spirit when they accept Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

Jesus would baptize with fire.

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

John uses the picture of a man winnowing grain to get his point across. Winnowing was the process of separating the wheat from the chaff after it was harvested. The winnowing floor was usually placed at the top of a hill where the breeze could blow freely. The wheat was tossed in the air, where the wind would blow the chaff away. The wheat would fall to the ground, where it could be gathered.

The person winnowing was dependent on the wind. There were times when the wind wasn’t strong enough to blow the chaff away. Then, there would be times when it was too strong and it would blow the wheat away with the chaff.



John said Jesus would come with the fan in his hand. In other words, he would be in control of the wind that would blow the chaff away.

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

He would gather the wheat and burn the chaff.

## JESUS COMES TO JOHN 3:13-17

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

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

Jesus came to John to be baptized. John, knowing who he was, resisted baptizing him. He recognized his unworthiness unworthy.

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

Jesus told John it was the right thing to do. Jesus had no sin to confess, or to repent of, but he submitted to John's baptism. Jesus was identifying with sinful man.

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

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

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

The Holy Spirit came in a visible way. God the Father made sure the world would know this was not an ordinary man.

The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus, and stayed. John 1:32 says, "*and it abode upon him*". Jesus was about to embark on his ministry. The Holy Spirit would be a vital part of that ministry.

The Father put His stamp of approval on His Son and on this baptism.

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

Jesus was about to do what he came to do. He came to do what the Father desired.

He would later say, "*I do always those things that please him*".

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

## THE TEMPTATION OF THE KING Chapter 4

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

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

It was God who led Jesus into temptation. God does not tempt anyone but He will allow the devil to tempt us. Jas 1:13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

We would do well to realize, if the devil will tempt the very Son of God, he will certainly tempt us. None of us are beyond the reach of the devil. Paul says temptation is "common to man". 1 Co 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

James said "*every man is tempted*". Jas 1:13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

Since the Lord allows us to be tempted, it must be for our good. Temptation gives us an opportunity to trust the Lord to give us the help we need. It helps us to say "no" to our flesh. It provides an opportunity to enjoy the rewards of victory. When we resist the flesh and the devil, we reap the rewards of victory.

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

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

#### THE DEVIL TEMPTED JESUS WHEN HE WAS PHYSICALLY WEAK

Jesus was tempted during the entire time in the wilderness (Lk.4:2), but these temptations were at the end of the forty days, and probably the most severe.

#### JESUS' FIRST TEMPTATION ("an appeal to the lust of the flesh") 4:3-4

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

Jesus has fasted for forty days and nights, he is weak physically. That's when the devil attacked. He'll try to do the same with us.

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

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

The word "if" in the above verse does not suggest the devil was doubting if Jesus was the Son of God. Lucifer knew Jesus very well. He was well aware of the fact that Jesus was the Son of God.

The word "if" in this instance is used as a statement of fact. For example, if a Sunday School teacher says to his class members, "IF you are a member of this class, you should be faithful". The "if" is not bringing into question whether those present are members. It is stating the fact that they are indeed members.

The devil tempted Jesus to turn the stones to bread, when he desperately needed bread. The devil tempts us with that which our flesh desires. James tells us we are tempted when we are drawn away of our OWN LUST...or desire. Jas 1:14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

#### JESUS RESPONSES TO THE FIRST TEMPTATION WITH THE WORD OF GOD.

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

Jesus said, "it is written". If the Son of God used the Word of God to fight the devil, certainly we should do the same. The Word is our sword to use offensively against the devil.

It's faith in the Word that is our shield, to deflect the fiery darts of the wicked one (Eph. 6:16).

#### JESUS' SECOND TEMPTATION ("an appeal to the pride of life") 4:5-6

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

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

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

As before, the devil starts his temptation with the words, "if thou be the Son of God".

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

The devil used scripture in an attempt to cause Jesus to do his bidding. He quoted scripture (Ps. 91:11-12), but he twisted its meaning. Psalm 91:11-12 tells us we can trust God even in difficult situations. However, it does not mean we can do foolish things and expect God to bail us out of trouble. The Lord will protect us but that does not mean we should walk in from of a train to prove his protection.

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

The second time, Jesus uses the Word of God to resist the devil's temptation.

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

#### JESUS' THIRD TEMPTATION ("an appeal to the lust of the eyes") 4:8-10

The devil took Jesus to an extremely high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world.

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

Seeing all the kingdoms of the world must have been some type of vision.

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

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

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

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

I am not saying the devil has more power than God. I am not saying the devil can overpower God. I am saying however, the Lord has allowed the devil to have a limited amount of authority in this world.

Satan has power beyond what we can imagine. He is not all powerful, but he is powerful.

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

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

One more time, Jesus overcomes the devil's temptation with the Word of God.

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

#### JESUS WAS VICTORIOUS OVER ALL THE DEVIL'S TEMPTATION

The devil left Jesus (for a while) and angels came to minister to him.

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

I've often wondered what exactly these angels did to minister to Jesus. He was hungry; did they bring him something to eat? He was tired; did they provide a place to rest? We aren't told but the same God who provided help for his victorious Son will provide aid to his children when they battle the devil and win (Heb. 1:14).

We do not have to be defeated. We have victory through the power of God. 1 Co 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### COULD JESUS HAVE SINNED

Before we finish with these verses, we need to ask ourselves a question that has been asked by many before us. Could Jesus have sinned? Was it possible for him to give in to the devil's suggestions and sin against His Father's will?

The question isn't, did Jesus sin. We know he DID NOT sin (2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Pet. 2:22). The question is, COULD he have sinned? Was he ABLE to sin?

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

Others say it was not possible for him to sin.

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

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

#### WHY WAS JESUS TEMPTED

Why was Jesus tempted in the first place?

- TO PROVE HE WOULDN'T SIN

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

- TO PASS THE TEST OF THIS WORLD

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

- THAT HE MIGHT FEEL WHAT WE FEEL (Heb 4:15)

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

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

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

#### THE KING'S MINISTRY 4:12-17

#### JOHN THE BAPTIST IS PUT IN PRISON

John the baptist was put in prison by Herod (Lk. 3:19-20).

#### JESUS GOES TO GALILEE

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

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

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

Even though Matthew does not record it, Jesus had visited Galilee earlier (Jn. 1:19-2:12).

Jesus left Nazareth and went to Capernaum.

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

These events were foretold in the Old Testament.

*Mt 4:14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,*

Jesus came to the land of Zabulon and Nephthalim. The tribes of Zebulon and Naphtali had settled here.

*Mt 4:15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;*

The part of Galilee that was called "Galilee of the Gentiles" was so called because of the large number of Gentiles who lived there.

This area is described as a place of darkness. Matthew quotes Isaiah 9:2. He changes the word "walked" in Isaiah to "sat" in his writing. It makes me think it was worse during Jesus' day than Isaiah's. The people "walked" in darkness during Isaiah's day. They were "sitting" in darkness in Jesus' day. It is as though, they have "sat down" in the darkness. They had gotten used to it. The darkness did not bother them anymore.

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

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

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

#### JESUS PREACHES REPENT

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

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

Jesus saw the darkness. The only hope they had was repent. They needed to admit their condition, confess and turn from it.

Unfortunately, Israel did not repent. Their kingdom was postponed.

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

#### THE KING'S MEN 4:18-22

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

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

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

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

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

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

Peter and Andrew were already disciples of Jesus (Jn.1:35-42). This is their call to serve the Lord.

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

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

This describes two things. First, the call of God. When looking for servants, he calls who he chooses.

Secondly, the answer of man. When God calls, he places the desire in the heart of the one he is calling (Phil. 2:13).

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

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

As did Peter and Andrew, James and John left all behind and followed Jesus.

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

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

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching and preaching in the synagogues.

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

Jesus went where the Jews were. He preached about the kingdom of God. He preached the Word of God that those who heard might have their lives changed.

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

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

Great multitudes followed Jesus. Sadly, most probably followed him out of curiosity, they wondered about his message. Many followed him out of selfishness; they wanted what he could do for them.

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

## THE KING'S MESSAGE .....THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT Chapters 5-7

*Great crowds were following Jesus by this time. He sees the multitudes and goes to a mountain with his disciples. He begins to teach them the principles of his kingdom.*

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

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

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

### THE BEATITUDES 5:3-12

Jesus speaks about how to be blessed. The word "blessed" means happy. It's the type of happiness that is not dependent upon circumstances.

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

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

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

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

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

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

How can this be applied to our lives?

- A poor beggar realizes his need

That's why he is begging. He has a need he cannot supply himself.

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

- A poor beggar has no pride

A beggar's need overcomes his pride. His need is so great; he doesn't care about what people think of him. When we get desperate for help from God, we won't care what people think about us.



- A beggar is desperate

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

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

- A beggar depends totally on those who pass by

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

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

- A beggar gets help

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

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

JESUS SAID THE WAY TO BE BLESSED, IS TO MOURN

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

The word "mourning" means "grieving". It refers to being in agony over our sin. The person who thinks they aren't so bad will never be blessed.

True blessing comes when we realize our condition. David recognized his sinful condition (Ps. 51:3). Peter recognized his sinful condition (Lk. 5:8). Paul recognized his sinful condition (Rom. 7:24, 1 Tim. 1:15). These men were the best of the best. If they saw their condition, surely we should.

James had the same idea about how we should feel about ourselves.

James 4:9–10 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

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

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

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

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

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

The kind of meekness Jesus speaks about is not weakness. It is power under control. There are many examples throughout scripture that demonstrate just that, power under control.

Abraham had a choice of the land, but allowed Lot to choose first (Gen. 13:7-9). Joseph treated his brothers well after they mistreated him terribly (Gen.50:20). Moses was meek but he stood up to Pharaoh and demanded he let God's people go (Ex. 5:1). Saul tried to kill David but David let him escape when he could have killed him (2 Sam. 24:3-7).

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

The person who is meek is the person who allows the Holy Spirit to keep them under control. The person who has their spirit under control is a mighty man indeed. The person who can't control their own spirit will never please God.

Pro 25:28 He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit *is like* a city *that is* broken down, *and* without walls.

Pro. 16:32 *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty*; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

The word translated "meekness" is used to describe a gentle breeze, medicine, and as a colt that is broken.

All of these, out of control, are very dangerous. On the other hand, these under control, can be very helpful. So it is with our nature. Out of control, it is truly dangerous. But, in control, God can use us mightily. We'll never be blessed until our spirit is under control.

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

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

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

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

Jesus uses hunger and thirst to illustrate this truth. Hunger and thirst are the two strongest impulses of man.

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

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

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

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

Mercy means, to be full of mercy, to be compassionate, to care. It means someone does not give us what we deserve. We deserve judgment, but God grants mercy and we do not receive that judgment.

The Romans had no mercy. They looked down on anyone who showed mercy. They thought mercy is weakness. They thought the person who showed mercy was too weak to take a stand. They thought mercy meant the person didn't have guts to do what should be done.

Jesus came telling his disciples to not be like the world. He exalted mercy.

Showing mercy is doing good to those who don't deserve it. They may not deserve mercy, but neither did we. We still don't deserve mercy from a holy God.

This verse does not mean if I am good to others, others will always be good to me. It doesn't mean if I care for people, people will always care about me. Jesus is proof. He was the most merciful person who ever lived, and they hung him on a cross.

This verse tells us if we show mercy, God will show us mercy. God is a God of mercy.

Psalms 130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

Ps 130:7 ... hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.

Lam 3:22 It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

Dan 9:9 To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;

Eph 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us...were dead in sins

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...

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

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

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

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

Jesus wants us to be pure on the inside. Anyone can ACT right. Anyone can pretend to be right. Jesus wants us to BE right.

This verse shows us we need to be right on the inside. If our heart is right, our actions will be right.

Jesus said those who are pure in heart “shall see God”. Most of us live our lives and never really SEE God. We never really SEE how much he loves us, we don’t really SEE how powerful he is, and we don’t SEE how holy he is.

God wants to reveal himself to us. But, he reveals himself only to those who are “pure in heart”. Maybe that’s why we know so little about him. Could that be the reason we SEE so little of his work in our lives.

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

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

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

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

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

And yet, we see so little peace in this world. The reason there is so little peace in the world is because there is so little peace in our hearts.

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

How can we be peacemakers?

- WE MUST HAVE PEACE

I can’t be a peacemaker if I don’t have peace in my own heart.

True peace can only come from God. Jesus said, “*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*” (John 14:27).

- WE NEED TO SURRENDER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

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

- WE NEED TO AVOID CONFLICT AND DIVISION

Romans 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

We need to decide, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I will not be caught up in conflict. I won’t be a part of discord among the brethren. If they want to argue, they’ll do it without me.

We need to pray for those who are in conflict.

Psalm 34:14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

- WE NEED TO BE WILLING TO FORGIVE

There will be times when people wrong us. We must be willing to forgive and move on.

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

- WE NEED TO SHARE CHRIST TO THE LOST

We may not bring peace to the entire world, but we can bring peace to some individuals.

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

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

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

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

The gospel message has always been ridiculed by the world. They are offended by anyone who would even suggest they are sinners, and need to repent.

The world hates us because we are different. The difference sets us apart.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Jesus said they hate us because we remind them of him. John 15:18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you.

And yet modern Christianity prides itself with being popular and accepted by the world. They encourage the church to "fit in".

Notice, Jesus talks about being persecuted "for righteousness sake" (v.10). He is talking about those who are mistreated because they do right. In verse 11, he makes it clear, what they say about us is not true, ("shall say all manner of evil against you falsely").

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

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

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

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

- REJOICE

Jesus told us to rejoice about it.

The disciples rejoiced because they were persecuted. Acts 5:41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

- KEEP LIVING RIGHT

Do right anyway. Don't let how they treat you effect how you live. Jesus didn't.

- KEEP TELLING

Don't let persecution stop you from sharing the gospel.

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

Jesus likens his disciples to salt.

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

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

- Salt seasons

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

- Salt preserves

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

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

Salt heals

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

- Salt stings

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

Jesus continues by commenting on salt that has lost its saltiness. If salt loses its "savour", it has lost its value. What good could it be? As Jesus said, it is good for nothing. When salt lost its saltiness, they would throw it in the streets where men and animals would walk on it.

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

Jesus likens his disciples to light.

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

The world is in darkness. There's a spiritual darkness that has spread across this entire world. The sad thing about it, men love darkness rather than light (Mat.5:19). Why does mankind love darkness? Because the light reveals their sin (Mat.5:20).

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

Jesus said, you don't light a candle and then hide the light. You put it to where it's light shines the brightest.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Jews had spent their entire lives in the Old Testament system. They had been taught the Law since birth. Jesus wanted to make sure they understood that he had not come to do away with the Law. He had not come to destroy the law; he had come to fulfil it. The Old Testament pointed toward him.

The Law was like a teacher, (Gal.5:24) bringing us to Christ. Jesus was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament said.

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

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

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

The "jot" is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It could be likened to the "i" of the English alphabet. The "tittle" is a small mark in a Hebrew letter. It could be likened to the dot over "i" in the English alphabet. Jesus is saying, not even the smallest portion of the Word of God will never pass away.

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

God says there will be consequences to those who violate its commandments.

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

The Scribes and Pharisees made differences between what they considered the great, and the small commandments. Jesus made it clear that all commandments are great. No doubt, there are different consequences for different violations. Certainly, breaking the "thou shalt not kill" commandment would have a greater consequence than breaking the "thou shalt not steal" commandment.

Jesus taught that all commandments come from God and are vitally important. Adam and Eve merely took a bite of a piece of fruit. Achan took a little bit of the spoils. Jonah refused to preach to one community. These acts don't appear too significant to us, but they are to God. He will not hold guiltless those who violate his word (Ex. 20:7).

Jesus speaks about more than just breaking the commandments. He talks about those who teach others to do the same. Such is the nature of mankind. Doing wrong is not enough; they want to include others in their wrong actions. How many have been led into trouble by a friend who influenced them into doing something that violated the Word of God?

Jesus said, "*the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven*". The disciples had a desire to have the more important places in the kingdom of God. Jesus lets them know their position in the kingdom will be determined by how they obey his commandments and how they teach others.

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

#### JESUS SPEAKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

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

Jesus is about to destroy their theory about righteousness. He said the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was not good enough to enter the kingdom of heaven.

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

This statement shocked everyone. If the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees wasn't good enough, what was?

#### JESUS CLARIFIES GOD'S LAW 5:21-48

Jesus explains how there is more to pleasing God than just outward deeds. God is concerned with our hearts. He wants us to do right but he wants us to do it for the right reason. He wants obedience from the heart.

Jesus emphasized obedience from the heart.

Doing what the Word of God says is important, but doing it for the right reason is even more important.

#### THE LAW AND MURDER AND ANGER 5:21-26

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

The "old time" Jesus refers to is the common interpretation of the Word of God by the Jews. He is trying to show them how what they believed was flawed and incomplete. Jesus didn't disagree with the Word, but he did disagree with their interpretation of the Word.

You have heard it is wrong to kill. This truth is taught in Ex. 20:13. Anyone who kills will be in danger of the judgment. The law said a murderer was to be put to death (Lev. 24:21, Nu. 35:16)

The "judgment" Jesus speaks of is the court system God told Moses to set up whereby guilt or innocence could be determined (De. 16:18).

So, Jesus is saying, if you do wrong, you will suffer the consequences.

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

Jesus goes further, “*But I say unto you*”. He wants us to realize, the sin of murder comes from a heart of anger.

“*That whosoever is angry with his brother*”. The sin of anger is a matter of the heart. The Jews looked only at the outward act of sin, but Jesus dealt with the problem of the heart. The Jews dealt with the actual act of murder, Jesus dealt with the anger that caused a person to commit murder.

God isn’t concerned with just WHAT we do, he is also concerned about WHY we do it. He doesn’t want us to just DO right, he wants us to BE right.

Jesus continues, “*shall be in danger of the judgment*”. The word “*judgment*” is speaking of a type of court system in place in that day. In every city they had a common court that was responsible to determine the guilt or innocence of someone accused of breaking the law.

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

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

Jesus continues by saying, “*but whosoever shall say, Fool*”. The word “fool” was a word used to only on rare occasions. It was a word that was used to describe a truly wicked person who was without God. It literally meant, a wicked idiot.

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

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

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

Three, he talks about a person who says, “*thou fool*”. Jesus is saying, this type of anger comes only from a person who isn’t saved. This person is in danger of going to hell. He will end up in hell if he doesn’t recognize the condition of his heart, and turn to the Lord for forgiveness.

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

#### JESUS CONTINUES DEALING WITH ANGER ISSUES

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

Therefore, if you bring an offering to the altar and remember there is a problem between yourself and another person.

*Mt 5:23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;*

Leave your offering and be reconciled to your brother. Then, you will be able to come back and truly worship.

Evil of any sort should be dealt with immediately and severely. If we don’t deal with it, it will worsen.

*Mt 5:24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

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

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

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

Jesus deals with those who have been taken to court. He says to settle the problem before you go to court, if possible. This probably has to do with an unpaid debt.

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

Paul deals with this type of issue in 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 6:6-7). Christians should be godly enough to work out their problems without going to an ungodly court system.

We do not need to constantly demand our rights and fight for ourselves. We are not to avenge ourselves (Rom. 12:19). We are to forgive each other as Christ forgave us (Col. 3:13). We are to forgive those who have wronged us, even if it ends up costing us (1 Cor.6:7).

As I have said, the problem Jesus is referring to seems to be a problem of an unpaid debt. He says, "*thou be cast into prison*". This is probably referring to debtor's prison where a person could work to pay off what he had defrauded.

Work out the problem as soon as possible, "*Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him*". Talk it over with the other person and work out an arrangement to settle the issue.

If you don't, they may decide to take you to court and the problem will get worse, "*lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge*"

If it goes to court and you are found guilty, you will have to pay the price, "*and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison*".

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

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

#### THE LAW AND ADULTERY 5:27-30

Jesus deals with the subject of adultery and refers to the seventh commandment (Ex. 20:14). Once again he said there is more to sin than just the actual act. Sin starts in the heart.

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

The Jewish rabbis taught there was no sin until the actual act was actually committed. Jesus says the sin starts in the heart. Impure and unholy thoughts are sin.

As with murder in verses 21 and 22, Jesus says it's the heart that matters.

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

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

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

What should be a person's attitude about sin? Jesus uses a graphic illustration to show how sin should be dealt with severely.

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

The word "*offend*" means to cause to stumble. It has the idea of a stone placed in the path that a person may stumble over.

Is Jesus speaking literally? Is he saying a person should literally mutilate their body in order to stop sinning? I don't think so. Pulling the right eye out or cutting the right hand off will not deal with the sin in the heart that is causing the sin.

We must remember, Jesus is speaking to a crowd where some are saved, and some are lost.



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

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

#### THE LAW AND DIVORCE 5:31-32

Jesus gives another example of how the Scribes and Pharisees had misinterpreted the Law. He deals with their misunderstanding about divorce.

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

*We must recognize, God is displeased with divorce. His will in marriage is for a man and woman to stay together for a lifetime. However, God allowed divorce in certain cases.*

The scripture Jesus is referring to in verse 31, is Deuteronomy 24:1.

Dt 24:1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

Even in Moses' day, there was much disagreement about what the word "uncleanness" meant. Some taught it meant only adultery. Others taught it meant anything the wife did that displeased the husband.

Many men were abusing this scripture and divorcing their wives over the smallest of matters. If their wife did even the slightest thing that displeased their husbands, they would get rid of them and find another wife.

Because of this mistreatment, Moses commanded there be a writing of divorcement in order to protect these neglected and abused wives. This was done because of the hardness of the hearts of the men (Mt. 19:8).

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

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

Jesus deals with the problem about the word "uncleanness" in Deuteronomy 21:1. He said there was to be no divorce, except in the case of fornication. The word "fornication" means sexual immorality. Therefore, sexual unfaithfulness is the only reason for divorce.

Divorce for any other reason than fornication, is adultery.

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

We must not forget, permission for divorce does not mean divorce is required. The bible speaks clearly that every effort should be made to keep the family together before a divorce. It further teaches that both partners should seek reconciliation after a divorce (1 Cor. 7:11).

The bible has much more to say about divorce and remarriage (Dt. 24:1-4; Mt.19:3-9; Mk.10:2-5; Lk.16:18; Rom.7:1-3; 1 Cor.7:12-16).

#### THE LAW AND OATHS 5:33-37

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

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

To "forswear" means to swear falsely or to perjure oneself.

Jesus told them to not swear (or make an oath) at all.

*Mt 5:34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:*

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

*Mt 5:35-36 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.*

Jesus says to just tell the truth all the time and not don't swear by anything.

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

If you say "yes", mean yes. If you say "no", mean no.

#### THE LAW AND RIGHTS OF RETALIATION 5:38-42

Jesus refers to the law dealing with retaliation (Ex.21:24; Lev. 24:20; Det.19:21). The Old Testament said an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth. Those who caused harm to others were to receive a similar fate.

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

The law dealing with an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth dealt with the Old Testament judicial system. These rules were given to help judges determine their rulings.

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

Jesus' comments in regards to this subject caught his listeners by surprise. He said evil is not to be resisted. If someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other cheek.

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

To be struck on the cheek was an insult to a Jew. There was more involved than just the pain of the blow, pride was involved.

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

We're living in a day when even Christians are demanding their rights. Somehow, many have gotten the idea that we must stand up for ourselves. They go so far as to say "if I don't stand up for myself, who will?" The answer, God will. Our heavenly Father watches over us. He sees what we are going through.

Paul gives us more insight on this subject in Romans (Rom. 12:18-21). He says we are to not avenge ourselves, but to trust God. God says vengeance is his and he will repay. We are to overcome evil with good.

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

These verses tell us a lot about ourselves. The natural tendency is to strike back, to get even, and to make them hurt like they did us. Jesus says we are to resist the natural tendency. After all, we are supposed to be like him.

There is no greater example of this principle in action than the Lord himself. He did not fight back or retaliate (Isa. 53:6).

This is dealing with personal revenge and does not mean we should not defend our family or our country.

Jesus continues this thought by dealing with someone who may be sued in court.

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

The coat was the garment that went under the outer clothing, also called a tunic. The cloke was the more expensive garment worn on the outside.

In the case of lawsuits, the Law allowed a tunic to be taken as a pledge for an unpaid loan. However, taking a cloak (coat) was forbidden because it would be needed during cold weather (Ex.22:26-27).

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

Our Lord is trying to help us understand that we can trust him. We can trust him not only when things are going well, we can trust him when everything seems to be going wrong. If someone defrauds us, he can replace our loss.

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

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

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

Jesus says our spirituality will be evident by how we treat others.

What would the lost world think if Christians always went the second mile? What if the Christian business owner went overboard to satisfy their customers? What if the Christian homeowner paid their bills before they came due? What if the Christian worker did more than their boss expected?

We may suffer some but the results of our godly testimony will make it all worthwhile.

Jesus deals with charity and loans.

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

Jesus said we should be free with our giving. Beggars in that day were not like those we see on the streets. Many of them are able to work and provide for themselves. Most of the beggars in Jesus' day could not do better for themselves. Because of some unavoidable circumstance they were forced to beg. Jesus said to give freely to these people.

We are admonished by scripture to give to the spiritual needs of the spiritual paupers of this world. Certainly we should see the importance of giving to their physical needs also.

Jesus taught that a loan should be looked at as a potential gift. Then, the "lender" will accept it better if the borrower does not repay the loan.

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

THE LAW AND LOVE 5:43-48

Jesus looks at the subject of love. "*Love thy neighbor*" summarizes the second half of the ten commandments (Ex. 20:13-17). The Jews had corrupted the Law, by adding "and hate your enemy" to their teaching.

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

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

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

Why should God's children live this way? Because that's how God lives.

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

God doesn't withhold his good things from certain people. God's love isn't dependent upon the actions of the ones he loves.

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

If we love only those who love us, what is so special about that? Jesus said, "even the publicans do the same".

*Mt 5:46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?*

A publican was a tax collector. They were some of the most wicked and hated people on earth. They overcharged the people for their taxes and kept part for themselves. Even though they were wicked and selfish, they loved those who loved them.

*Mt 5:47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?*

Our love is one proof of our salvation (Jn. 13:35; 1 Jn. 3:14).

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

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

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

“Perfect” means to be complete. It literally means to have all the parts. Originally, this word was used when speaking of a machine having all of its parts.

We need to have all our spiritual parts. Like Paul said, none of us have reached this goal, but we should not quit trying (Phil.3:12).

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

#### JESUS DEALS WITH REWARDS Chapter 6

In this chapter Jesus’ teaching should cause us to search our hearts to make certain we are doing what we do for the right reason. We must guard against doing what we do to be seen of men. All our works should be done for the Lord.

The desire to be recognized is an evil vice. If our conduct is controlled by what people think about us, we will never please God.

#### JESUS TEACHES ABOUT GIVING 6:1-4

Jesus deals with “alms”. Alms is a word that has the idea of doing a good deed. In this context it means to give financially.

He starts this subject by telling us to “take heed”. This phrase has the idea of paying attention. We should examine our hearts closely to determine our motives for why we give. It matters what we give but it also matters *why* we give.

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

We must not overlook what Jesus is saying here. He says if we give to be seen of men we will receive no reward from the Lord.

We are rewarded for our service for the Lord. We are rewarded here and now. God blesses those who do his will. But, we will be rewarded later when we stand before the Lord (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

The person who does what they do to be seen of men forfeits the reward here and now, and also the reward they could have received when they stand before the Lord.

Paul talks about rewards being burnt when we stand before the Lord (1 Cor. 3:15). How disappointed many will be in that day. When our works burn up and realize we have lost rewards we could have received.

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

Jesus said “they have their reward”. They do what they do to be seen of men and men saw what they did. They got what they wanted, and that’s all they will get.

The word “hypocrites” was a word used for actors in a play. They pretended to be someone they weren’t. Those who give to be seen of men are pretending to care for others. The truth is, they only care for themselves because they want the applause of men.

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

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

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

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

## JESUS TEACHES ABOUT PRAYER 6:5-15

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

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

The Scribes and Pharisees loved to pray long and loud.

Jesus said, "*they have their reward*". They prayed to be heard of men, men heard them, so they have what they wanted. This means God will not answer their prayers.

Jesus goes on to teach us how we should pray. Prayer should be a vital part of the life of every Christian.

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

We should find a place where we can get away (*thy closet*). We should shut the world out (*shut thy door*). We should realize we are talking to our heavenly Father (*pray to thy Father*). We should expect an answer (*shall reward thee openly*).

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

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

This doesn't mean we are to never pray the same prayer more than once. We are admonished to keep asking in more than one place in the Word of God. Jesus will deal with this in Matthew 7:7-8.

Our Father knows what we need. I'm so glad we have a God who knows what we need and will answer accordingly.

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

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

*Mt 6:9-14 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

### JESUS TEACHES US...PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FATHER "Our Father"

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

Those who are saved can go to the Lord because he is their Father. Paul says we can call him daddy.

*Gal 4:6,7 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father*

He understands us like a parent understands their child. He knows we are weak, he knows we are helpless. We should go to him as a little child goes to their father when they are need something.

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

When we pray, we should be focused on our Father.

The phrase "Hallowed be thy name" reminds us that our God is holy. Therefore, we know he will answer rightly. He is not like an old grandpa who can be persuaded by his little grandchild's request. I'm glad we have a God who will always do right. He won't be changed, even by my whining to him.

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

"Thy kingdom come" speaks of a future event. We look by faith to that which is ahead. In like fashion, we should pray with faith.

Faith is a vital part of prayer. Faith moves God. He is the God of heaven and earth, and he is in control of all things. We are approaching one who is able. He is bigger than our problem.

*Mk. 9:23 ...all things are possible to him that believeth.*

Mat. 21:22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Mk. 11:24 ...when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.

JESUS TEACHES US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FAITHFULNESS “Thy will be done”

“Thy will be done” is a statement of submission. It reminds me of Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane.

A great part of our prayer should be submission. We have our requests, and we have our desires, but what he wants should be more important. We should be willing to give up our desires for his will.

JESUS TEACHES US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FOOD “Give us this day our daily bread”

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

Notice Jesus admonishes us to pray for our *daily* bread. This should remind us how we need him constantly. It should also remind us how he will provide in his time. Asking for *daily* food suggests the need is urgent. There may be times when it seems like he isn’t hearing us. But, at the right time, he will provide.

JESUS TEACHES US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FAILURES “And forgive us our debts”

It’s easy to see the faults of others. We are not as prone to see our own failures. Our time of prayer is a wonderful opportunity for the Lord to show us any failures in our lives. We should confess these failures immediately.

We will never pray through a sinful heart. We may preach, teach, sing and even witness through a dirty heart, but we will never pray through a sinful heart.

JESUS TEACHES US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FORGIVENESS “as we forgive our debtors”

Refusing to forgive those who wrong us will hinder our prayers. Jesus said we should forgive even if someone wrongs us over and over (Mat. 18:21-22).

How can we refuse to forgive those who wronged us when God forgave us (Eph. 4:32)?

JESUS TEACHES US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FELLOWSHIP “And lead us not into temptation”

This reminds us how the Lord wants to lead us. The Christian life is a walk with God. Our fellowship with him is so important. The devil will set traps in our paths.

We should ask the Lord to direct our lives in such a manner to where we don’t fall into these traps.

We should ask God to protect us from anything or anyone who would do us harm (Mt 26:41).

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

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

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

We should close our prayers in the attitude of victory.

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

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT FASTING 6:16-18

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

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

Fasting was observed for several different reasons.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I believe fasting should be a part of our lives today. Unfortunately, very few ever fast. Sacrificing the physical desires and needs is difficult, but it certainly is worth it. The spiritual blessings experienced will be well worth the physical discomfort.

#### JESUS TEACHES ABOUT TRUE TREASURES 6:19-24

Jesus tells us where to NOT lay up our treasures.

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

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

One, everything we have on earth will decay.

Clothing and garments were a way to display wealth in Jesus' day. But, their garments were very susceptible to moths. It was unwise to store up clothing that would be destroyed quickly.

What wasn't eaten by moths will rust or decay in some way. No matter how well we build or what materials we use, all things will decay.

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

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

Jesus tells us where TO lay up our treasures.

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

By serving the Lord faithfully we are laying up treasures in heaven. Even the smallest deed done in obedience to the Lord will be rewarded (Mat.10:42).

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

Jesus is not implying that all riches are evil, or that no one should be rich. Many of God's choice servants were rich (Job, Abraham, Solomon, David, and Philemon). It's ok to have riches, as long as the riches don't have us.

Money can be used for the glory of God. It takes money to operate churches. Missionaries need money to minister at the place God has placed them. It takes money for Christian radio and television programs.

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

Our treasure is what we care about. It's something we love, something that is valuable to us. Where our treasure is, our heart will be. The heart of the old miser will be on the money he loves.

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

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

How sad it would be to live for things that will not last past the grave. One of the devil's most convincing lies is we would be happy if we were rich. How many have fallen for this lie and have been disappointed.

The truth is, riches don't satisfy, riches won't make us happy, and the more we get the more we want.

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

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

In these verses, Jesus talks about a “single eye” and an “evil eye”. These verses deal with what we are looking at. How we view things will affect our entire life.

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

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

In order to properly understand what Jesus is saying, we must remember, what he says here is connected to what he said in the previous verses. He just warned us about laying up treasures in heaven and not overly desiring the things of this world.

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

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

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

The word “serve” means to be a slave to.

Notice, there is no middle ground. Jesus mentions only love and hate. Both are extremes.

An amazing amount of people try to divide themselves between God and the world. As Jesus makes abundantly clear, that is impossible. The godly life and the worldly life at complete opposites. We cannot more do both than we could go north and south at the same time.

The question is simple, who will be our master, who will control us?

We are the ones who decide whom we will serve. Joshua’s message still rings true today, “choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Jos 24:15).

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT WORRYING 6:25-34

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

The words “Take no thought” mean “do not be anxious” or, “do not worry”. The Word of God admonishes us to worry about nothing, but to pray about everything.

Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

We don’t have to worry because we can trust God.

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

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

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

Everyone knows it is the father who takes care of his children. Since God is our father, we can depend on him as a small child depends on their daddy. Your heavenly father will supply your every need.

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

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

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



What is it in our lives that our God cannot handle? We can say with the men of old, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him".

Luke 18:27 The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

Php 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Jesus tells us to not worry even when the need is serious. He talks about "*what ye shall eat*", and "*what ye shall drink*", and "*what ye shall put on*". Food, drink, and clothing are vitally important. If we don't have these, the consequences will be serious. We cannot live without these items. And still, Jesus says we are not to worry, even about these very serious matters.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But when Jesus refers here to, "*taking thought*", he is not talking about our thought life in general. He is talking about worrying.

As powerful as our thoughts can be, they have their limits. All the thinking in the world will not add to our height.

A cubit is the distance from a man's elbow to the end of his longest finger. To simply things, many times the cubit is rounded off to 18 inches.

Jesus' point is, all our worry will not change one thing.

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

Now, Jesus uses the lilies of the field as an example to prove how we can trust God to provide our clothing. He says, "*why take ye thought for raiment*". Think of all the time, effort, and money that go into what we wear.

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

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

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

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

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

God's simplest is much better than man's best.

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

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

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

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

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

When the devil attacks us with his lies, we need to listen to the Spirit of God.

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

A Gentile was anyone who was not a Jew. They were those without the law. The Jews saw Gentiles as people without God.

Jesus says when we worry we are acting like a person without God. That is understandable.

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

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

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

Jesus makes an appeal that we put first things first. He says we should seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. If we'll put him first, he'll take care of “*all these things*”.

When we keep our focus on the spiritual, God will take care of the material. We should keep in mind, when we follow the Lord and do his will, he will always provide what we need.

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

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

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

#### JESUS TEACHES ABOUT JUDGING 7:1-6

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

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

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

Jesus warns against judging by appearance. He says we are to judge RIGHTLY. He said, “*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*” (John 7:24).

#### THERE ARE TIMES WHEN JUDGING IS RIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### WHY WE SHOULD NOT JUDGE

Jesus tells us to not judge, but why?

- We don't know the heart of others

As previously stated, these verses are talking about us judging the motives of others. We don't know why they do what they do.

- We usually judge out of pride

Like the Pharisee who thought he was not like others (Lk.18:11). It's easy to see the faults of others, but miss our own faults. We may not be doing exactly what someone else is doing, but we do something just as bad (Romans 2:3).

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

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

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

We should judge others by the standards we would want to be judged by.

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

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

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

The *mote* is something like a small splinter. The word *mote* is like a large slab of wood, or a beam.

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

How can the person with the beam help the person with the splinter?

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

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

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

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

These verses tell us, we should be concerned about others. Jesus isn't saying we should not be concerned about others, but he is saying we shouldn't be critical of others.

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

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

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

The gospel is to be preached to every creature (Mk. 16:15). However, there are people who have hardened their hearts. They ridicule, mock and oppose the message that provides their only hope of escaping hell. The gospel is to all (Mk. 16:15). It has the power to save anyone who will accept it (Rom. 1:16).

But, God will not force it on anyone. God himself will quit speaking to certain people (Rom. 1:27).

He calls this message “*pearls*”. A pearl is precious. The gospel message is precious. Hogs see no value in pearls. They’ll trample them in the mud, just as they would a stone. In like fashion, there are people who see no value in the gospel message. They think nothing of ridiculing it.

A pearl is developed through pain. A small piece of sand gets inside the oyster and causes irritation. The oyster secretes liquid called nacre and covers the grain of sand. After time, the result is a pearl.

In like fashion, the gospel came through the pain of the cross. Jesus suffered horribly.

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

The emphasis in these verses is on that which is holy and not on the dogs or swine. The message of the gospel is to be respected. All are sinners. All could be considered dogs and swine. But, these verses deal with those who ridicule the gospel message.

#### JESUS TEACHES ABOUT PRAYER 7:7-11

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

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

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

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

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

Why does God delay?

- We haven’t really asked

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

- We aren’t asking in faith

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

- We have sin in our lives

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

- God wants us to draw closer to him

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

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

So many times, God answers our prayer, and we forget to thank him.

I believe there are times when God delays answering simply because he wants us to appreciate what he has already done.

- God wants to increase our faith

It’s easy to doubt when the answer doesn’t come quickly. But, God wants to give us assurance even when the answer has not yet come.

How wonderful it is to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit assuring us that the Lord will hear and answer.

- That we might experience God’s grace

We’ll never know God’s grace until we face difficulty.

There are times when God waits to answer our prayer in order that we might have to depend on his grace to get us through what we're facing.

- The devil may be fighting

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

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

Jesus assures those who continue to ask, it shall be given, and those who continue to seek, they shall find, and those who continue to knock, it shall be opened unto them. We shall receive.

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

Jesus gives an example of a son who asks his father for something. No father would give a stone or snake to his hungry son.

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

The point is, don't stop asking. Your heavenly father loves you and wants what's best for you. Keep asking, keep trusting, and keep expecting.

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

#### THE GOLDEN RULE 7:12

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

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

It's amazing how different a situation looks when it's us going through it. It's easy to be critical when it's someone else. It's easy to say what we would do if it was us. But, we really have no idea what we would do, until we are in the same circumstances.

The "*law and the prophets*" is a term used for the Old Testament.

This is one of the two great commandments taught in the Old Testament. The other is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" (Mat. 22:37).

So much of the bible deals with how we are to treat others. So many of our problems come from not treating each other as the bible says. Just think about it. If followed, this one rule would end all murder, lying, cheating, adultery, stealing, slander, selfishness, impatience, gossip and any other sin against man.

Jesus was a walking example of this. He did always that which was best for those he came in contact with.

#### THE TWO GATES 7:13-14

*Mt 7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

Jesus talks about two gates and two ways. These are unusual gates. Most gates are found at the end of a path. These gates are placed at the beginning of their paths.

A gate is an entry way to something. There's a gate that leads to the path to life, and a gate that leads to the path to destruction.

The word "*strait*" means narrow. It may be narrow, but it is the way to eternal life. This way is so narrow it leaves no room for discussion. A lot of people have problems with there being one way.

Jesus said, "I am THE way, THE truth, and THE life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me".

There is no other way to get to heaven. All others who claim to have a way to heaven are wrong.

This way is so narrow only one person can go through at a time. We get saved individually. Salvation is not something that we can do as a group. Several people may get saved at the same time, but they will be saved as individuals.

This way is so narrow we cannot take anything with us. We must lay pride and sin down in order to pass through this gate.

Jesus says we should “*enter*” the gate that leads to life. We enter by faith. The bible says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:” (Eph 2:8).

We cannot enter this gate by our works. Our good deeds are no good in the eyes of God (Isa. 64:6).

The bible teaches salvation is not of works. Eph 2:9 says, “Not of works, lest any man should boast”. No one will brag in heaven about what all they did to get there.

The Old Testament also speaks of the two ways (Dt. 30:19; Jer. 21:8).

These words tell us there is something beyond this world. Death is not the end. They also tell us there are only two places to go. There’s heaven, and there’s hell. We must prepare now for what’s ahead. If you have never repented of your sin and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, please do it right now. Do not delay another second. You have no promise of tomorrow.

#### JESUS WARNS ABOUT FALSE PROPHETS 7:15-20

*Mt 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

God spoke through prophets like he speaks through preachers today. But, the devil also has prophets who speak for him. These are called false prophets because they do not speak the truth. The devil has always been a liar and he wants to deceive. He is the world’s greatest counterfeiter. He’s an expert at making a fake look like the genuine. He controls people by making them think they are getting something real.

The word “*beware*” means to be cautious. We must be careful who we listen to. We are blessed to have the completed bible that we can use to determine if what we are hearing is true.

Jesus has just warned us about a path that leads to destruction. Now, he is warning us about people who try to get people to follow that path. They tell us the wide way is the right way.

These false prophets come in “*sheep’s clothing*”. They pretend to be something they aren’t. They come as gentle sheep, but they are actually ravenous wolves.

Many times, these false prophets do not just deceive others, but they are deceived themselves. They have believed the devil’s lies.

It’s easy to see the reason why Jesus warns us about these false prophets. What could be worse than to believe a lie, and to convince others you are telling the truth?

*Mt 7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

To “*know them*” means we will be able to discern what they really are. You can tell what type of person they are by the fruit they bear. We determine what type a tree is not by its leaves, bark, or blossoms, but by its fruit.

In time, the truth about these deceivers will surface. Their wicked practices will reveal their true nature.

You do not gather grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles. In like fashion, we cannot gather spiritual benefits from an ungodly source. Their hearts are not right, and their message is wrong. How could any good come from this?

*Mt 7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*

The “*good tree*” is an illustration of a person with a good (godly) heart. The “*corrupt tree*” is an illustration of a person with an evil heart.

Since the false prophet has a corrupt heart, his message will be corrupt.

*Mt 7:18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

What the heart is, the life will be. A tree will produce fruit according to what type of tree it is. It cannot do otherwise. A godly person will live a godly life. An ungodly person will live an ungodly life.

*Mt 7:19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

In Jesus’ day, trees were used for beauty but they were mostly used for the fruit they bore. A tree that would not bear was cut down and replaced.

The end of the false prophet is hell. Unfortunately, those who believe their message will go there also. The message of the false prophet sends people to hell.

Since their message is false and their end is hell, we need to be able to determine if someone is a false prophet. How do we do that?

#### HOW CAN WE DETERMINE IF WE ARE LISTENING TO A FALSE PROPHET

- We should listen intently to what they are saying

Does what they say agree with the bible? Fortunately, we have the word of God to help us determine if what we hear is the truth. Let God be true and every man a liar.

- We should observe their lifestyle

Do they live a godly life? Do they display humility?

- We should observe the results of their preaching

Does their message help people? Are lives changed for the better? Are those who listen to them closer to God because they have listened? True prophets preach a message that converts sinners.

*Mt 7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

A tree can't be changed but I am so glad God can change the heart of a sinner and make it pure.

#### THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALSE PROPHETS AND THOSE WHO FOLLOW THEM

Those who are not real will face a horrible judgment.

*Mt 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

Notice Jesus says "my" Father. He does not say, "your" Father. It's obvious; these people had never been saved. God was not their father.

Anyone can claim to be saved, but real salvation is a change of the heart. Many profess salvation, but don't possess salvation. Those who are truly saved will have a desire to do what pleases the Lord.

Those who do ("*doeth*") the Lord's will are those who are really saved. But, what is the Lord's will? The Lord's will is that all would believe on his son. Jesus said in John 6:40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day".

We must believe on him to be saved.

Believing ON the Lord is totally different than believing IN the Lord. Believing in him means that we believe there was a man named Jesus. Believing on him means we have depended on him to forgive us of all our sin. Believing on the Lord means we believe what the bible teaches about how we are lost in our sin, how Jesus died for us on the cross, and we have repented of our sin and placed our trust in him for salvation.

We are not saved by our works but if we are really saved we will work (Eph.2:10). If you don't have a desire to please the Lord, you need to check up and make sure you are really saved.

A saved person is not perfect. They will still sin. But, sin will not be the pattern of their life. When they sin, it will break their heart.

*Mt 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*

In "*that day*" refers to when all of lost humanity will stand before the Lord. Some of those in that group will be ones who professed the Lord ("*Lord, Lord*"), but did not possess him in their hearts.

We should all remember, one day we will stand before the Lord.

Those who are saved will stand before the Lord at the Bema Seat (Rom. 2:16; 14:9; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10). Those who are lost will stand before the Lord at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

Many will expect to enter heaven because of the deeds they did. Some of them "*prophesied*", some of the "*cast out devils*", and some did "*wonderful works*". Good works are not a guarantee of salvation.

Even miraculous works are not a guarantee of salvation. The magicians of Egypt did the same miracles Moses did, but they certainly did not know the Lord (Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18). We must remember the devil is a master counterfeiter. He has more power than we give him credit for. He can still do "miraculous" works.

*Mt 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

These verses are some of the saddest in the Word of God. Jesus tells us there are some who think they are going to heaven. But, they find out too late, they were mistaken. Instead of entering the gates of pearl and spending eternity with the Lord, they are sent to the torment of hell.

Just think, they will stand before the one they cursed and denied. They will be judged by the one who died for them.

The Lord's reason for judging them will be the fact that he never knew them. Notice, he will not say, "I once knew you, but you lost your salvation". He will say he "*never*" knew them.

No matter what argument is given, no one will be able to convince the Lord to change his verdict. Those who are lost will be condemned.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE 7:24-27

*Mt 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

Jesus gives an illustration to show the importance of hearing, and doing, the word of God. He said those who hear and obey are wise. Hearing alone is not enough, we must do the word (Jam. 1:22).

A house must have firm foundation if it is to stand. We could say the house is depending on its foundation.

The person who hears and obeys the word is like a wise man who builds his house on a rock. He builds on a firm foundation.

Like the house depends on the foundation, the wise man depends on the word of God. He believes it, he depends on it, and he obeys it. The person who hears and obeys the word of God is depending on something he can trust.

Jesus' illustration deals with how we listen to his word and how we apply it to our lives. Hearing is not just listening to the words. Hearing means, listening, believing, and applying to our lives what we have heard.

What a privilege it is for God to speak to us.

- He speaks through the Scriptures

Jam. 1:18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth...

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God

That's why it is so important for us to stay in Word.

- He speaks through the Spirit

1 Co 2:9-10 ... Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit

If he doesn't speak, we will not get any spiritual help.

- He speaks through the sermons

1 Co 1:21 ... it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

We need to listen to the preacher when he delivers the word.

#### HOW DO WE LISTEN TO HIM?

- We must be redeemed

We cannot receive his word unless we are saved.

1 Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

- We must be right

We will not hear his voice if we have sin in our lives (Jam. 1:21). Sin hinders him.

- We must be receptive

Jam. 1:21 ...receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

- We must be responsive

We must DO what he tells us to do in his word. He speaks to us so we will DO what he says.



This is what Jesus is trying to get across in these verses. James said, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves (Jam. 1:22).

*Mt 7:25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

Not surprisingly, a storm comes. This is a picture of a person who has built their life on the Word of God. The obedient listener was prepared because he had a firm foundation

This storm can be applied to the time when we stand before the Lord as Jesus speaks of in the previous verses.

The storm could also be applied to the troubles of life we all have to face. The only way to be ready for life's storms is to hear and obey the words of Christ. Then, and only then, will we be ready to face the hardships that will certainly come.

*Mt 7:26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*

Jesus speaks of another type of person. He calls this man, “*foolish*”, and foolish he is. This person hears the words of Christ but does not obey.

What is the sand Jesus refers to? I believe it is anything other than him, and his word. His word is the only thing we can trust in. It is the one thing on earth that will never let us down.

*Mt 7:27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

The house built on the sand could not endure the fierce storm. It crumbled. Everything the foolish man had worked for, was gone, nothing was left.

The thrust of Jesus' message deals with the need to prepare for what's ahead. Both houses seemed fine, until the storm hit. We would do well to give heed to God's voice. We will certainly regret it if we don't.

Notice, both houses look fine. There is no indication the wise man's house looks stronger, or better than the foolish man's.

Notice, a storm comes to both, the wise and the foolish. The one difference, one was prepared, and the other wasn't. One endured the storm, and one was devastated by it. It would be wise for us all to take a good look at our lives. Do we live according to the word of God? Do we live according to its principles?

JESUS ENDS THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT 7:28-29

*Mt 7:28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:*

Jesus concludes his message. Those who heard him were amazed. They were not amazed about his eloquent speech. He did not impress them with his big words or his intellect.

*Mt 7:29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

They were amazed because what they heard touched their hearts. When he spoke, the Spirit moved.

They had heard the best of the best, but none of them were like this man. They had listened to the intellectuals of their day, but none of them spoke with the insight this man had.

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

A king is in charge of his domain. He has control over all he oversees. So it is with Jesus. He shows his authority over all things. He is about to show his authority over sickness.

THIS KING HAS POWER OVER SICKNESS 8:1-17

*Mt 8:1 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.*

Jesus comes down from the mountain where he preached the sermon on the mount. It's important to realize, Matthew now returns to the circumstances taking place before Jesus went to the mountain to preach the sermon on the mount.

To get an idea of what's happening, try reading the last few verses of chapter 4 and then turn to the first few verses of chapter 8.

Jesus is traveling throughout the land of Galilee (Mt. 4:23). He is preaching the message of the kingdom and doing miracles. Multitudes are following him (Mt. 4:24-25).

Jesus did many miracles. He did these miracles because he cared for the people. But, he also did miracles to prove he was truly the Messiah the Jews had been waiting for. The bible actually calls his miracles "signs" (Jn. 20:30). His miracles were a *sign* that he was the Messiah.

#### JESUS HEALS A LEPER 8:2-4

*Mt 8:2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

We don't know how this leper made it to Jesus. Those who were afflicted with leprosy were forced to live away from people. They were not allowed to live in towns, or near people. When near others the leper was to cry "unclean, unclean" (Lev. 13:45-46). In spite of all this, here's a man who was determined to get to Jesus. This leper had somehow heard about Jesus for he believed Jesus could heal him. He bowed down before Jesus in respect and called him Lord. We don't know how much this man understood about Jesus, but he knew he was no ordinary man.

There is so much in this verse. We see a man in a terrible condition who is trusting Jesus to help him. He did not say, "if you can". He said "if thou wilt". He did not question Jesus' ability to heal him.

We see a man who is aware of his condition. He knows he is a leper. He is willing to admit his need.

We are reminded of the fact that the Lord has a will. The leper says, "if thou wilt". What he wants should be more important than what we want.

*Mt 8:3 And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

Jesus said, "*I will; be thou clean*". As he spoke these words he did something no other man on earth would have done, he touched the leper. No one would touch a leper for fear of catching the disease. No one would touch a leper because they would become ceremonially unclean by doing so.

But, Jesus touched him. However, Jesus didn't really touch a leper, he touched a healed man, for he was healed the instant he touched him.

*Mt 8:4 And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

Jesus told the healed man to tell no one what happened to him. Jesus knew publicity would hinder his ability to travel freely and preach his message. He did not want to be known as a miracle worker. He wanted his message to take precedence.

Jesus told the man to show himself to the priest. According to Old Testament law, a person who had been healed of leprosy had to show themselves to a priest, allow the priest to examine them, and determine whether they were indeed cured. If they were indeed healed, they would offer a sacrifice and the priest would declare them clean (Lev. 14:10-22).

How is leprosy like sin?

- Leprosy is a bacterial disease

It is contracted by a germ.

A person catches leprosy when they get too close to someone who has leprosy. We cannot get too close to sin without it affecting us. It does matter who we associate with.

The bible clearly teaches that we should avoid those who live in an ungodly manner. They will influence us by their sin.

- Leprosy starts small

It is not a skin disease as we might think. It actually starts near the brain or spinal cord. It may start small, but that does not mean it isn't serious.

I'm not sure where we got the idea that a little sin won't hurt us. Like leprosy, sin may start small but it spreads and causes horrible damage. If you doubt that, ask David (Ps. 38:1-11). What started as a simple look at a beautiful woman ended up costing him greatly.

- Leprosy causes numbness

The nervous system is damaged, so the person with leprosy loses their feelings. They cannot feel pain in their fingers, or toes. Some with leprosy have actually had their fingers eaten off by rats as they slept because they could not feel the pain.

Like leprosy, sin dulls our senses. We no longer feel. We don't feel for those in need. We are not touched by those who are hurting. What could be worse than to not care?

- Leprosy is obvious

Leprosy starts on the inside but before long it reveals itself on the outside. Tumor-like growths develop. The skin becomes scaly. In other words, leprosy is a disease that cannot be hidden.

The same is true of sin. We may be able to hide it for a while, but sooner or later, others will notice the difference in us. Sin can't be hidden for long.

- Leprosy is contagious

Leprosy can be spread to others. We dare not forget this when it comes to sin. Our influence will affect those around us. How many children have followed the sinful path of their parents? How many wives have been caught up in the same sin they see in their husbands? How many lives have been ruined because of an ungodly friend's sinful influence?

- There was no cure for leprosy in bible times

In bible times there was no medicine that would cure leprosy. Like this man, the only hope for the leper was the mercy of God.

I am so glad to be able to say, there is a cure for spiritual leprosy. The blood of Christ will cleanse us from all sin. He is ready and willing to forgive (1 Jn.1:9).

JESUS HEALS A CENTURION'S SERVANT 8:5-13

*Mt 8:5 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,*

Jesus goes to Capernaum where he is met by a centurion. A centurion was an officer in the army of Rome. They were named centurions because they were in charge of 100 men.

*Mt 8:6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.*

This centurion approached Jesus and told him he had a sick servant at home. Palsy was a type of paralysis. The servant "*lieth at home*".

Most men would have gotten rid of a servant who was unable to do their tasks. Not this centurion. This centurion obviously cared about his servant.

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

Jesus offers to come the house of the centurion and heal his servant. The centurion was a Gentile and a Jew would not normally go to the house of a Gentile. But, Jesus was not an ordinary man.

*Mt. 8:8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.*

The centurion resists Jesus' offer to come to his house. He did not feel worthy for Jesus to come to under his roof.

*Mt 8:9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*

*The centurion understood the use of authority. He was a man who had authority over 100 soldiers. He realized his authority gave him the power to command the men under him. Because of his authority they would obey his instructions.*

Since the centurion understood the power of authority, he believed Jesus had the power to simply speak and his servant would be healed. What faith. He recognized Jesus had authority from heaven.

*Mt 8:10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*

Jesus marvels at the centurion's faith. He had not seen such faith, even among the Jews.

The centurion believed Jesus could heal his servant without having to go to him. That certainly makes sense. If Jesus had the power to heal those near him, certainly he would not be restricted by distance. If he can heal from two feet away, can he not also heal from one mile away, or half way around the world?

It will do us well to realize the authority of our Lord. Authority means power. The authority of a captain gives him power over his soldiers. Jesus' has authority over all things. Whatever your problem, he has power over it.

*Mt 8:11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.*

The term "from the east and west" refer to the extreme points of the compass. It is referring to the entire world. Jesus was speaking about the Gentiles who would accept his salvation message, and enter the kingdom of heaven.

The phrase "*shall sit down*" refers to sitting with someone at a meal. The Jews spoke of the kingdom as a feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We do much the same thing when we refer to heaven as "walking on streets of gold".

Jesus was talking about how Gentiles from all the world would accept Christ

People from the farthest parts of the earth will accept the gospel message, but many of the Jews will reject it. Jesus said some of the children of the kingdom (the Jews) shall be cast out into outer darkness. The Jews thought they were certain to enter the kingdom. Jesus warns them by saying they will be cast into outer darkness if they reject him and his message.

The Old Testament speaks often of how the Gentiles will be allowed access into the kingdom (Isaiah 2:2-3; 11:10; 49:6, 12; 54:1-3; 59:19; Jeremiah 3:18; Hosea 2:23; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:1-2). God was totally aware of how the Jews would reject his son and how he would turn to the Gentiles.

*Mt 8:12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

The Jews saw themselves as the children of Abraham and believed that guaranteed them a place in the kingdom.

Salvation isn't something we can inherit from our parents. You may have been raised in a Christian home by godly parents, but that does not save you. Salvation is an individual relationship with Jesus Christ.

Some have tried to use verse twelve to teach a person can lose their salvation. As we have seen, this verse teaches no such thing.

*Mt 8:13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.*

Jesus tells the centurion to go home because his servant has been healed. His servant was healed immediately (*the selfsame hour*).

Jesus was moved by the faith of the centurion. He said "*as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee*".

The same is true for us today. It is our faith that moves God. As the centurion believed Jesus had authority, and knew he could heal his servant, we should believe he still has the authority to answer our prayer.

Simply put, faith is believing and trusting God. Faith is seeing things that haven't happened as though they have (Rom. 4:17). Faith is knowing that God is working even though we can't see any evidence of it (Heb. 11:1).

Faith is based on the word of God, not on our feelings (Ro 10:17). We trust what God said.

Faith is a vital part of the Christian life.

- We are saved by grace through *faith*

We get saved by trusting (faith) the finished work of Calvary (Eph.2:8; Jn 20:31; Acts 16:31; 1 Jn 3:23).

- We walk by faith

Walking by faith means we live every day trusting the Lord and depending on him (Mat. 6:25; 2 Cor. 5:7).

- We serve God by faith

If we want the Lord to use us, we must have faith (Mat. 17:19-21).

- We overcome the devil by faith

Faith gives us the power to trust God, and stand against the devil (1 Jn 5:4; 1 Pet. 5:9).

- Faith helps us through difficult times

David said when he was afraid, he trusted God (Ps 56:3).

Faith helps us keep our mind on God during the hard times (Isa. 26:3; Dan. 3:17; Ps 9:9; Ps. 46:1-2; Ps. 62:8; Jam 1:2-3).

- We cannot please the Lord without faith

Our faith pleases God because it means we believe what he has said (Heb 11:6). When we don't believe God, we are calling him a liar (1 Jn 5:10).

- Lack of faith grieves God

When we don't believe him, it hurts him (Mt 17:17; Mt 8:26; Mk 16:14).

- Lack of faith hinders God

Since our faith moves God, our lack of faith keeps him from moving (Mt 13:58, Matt.17:20).

- Our faith should be growing

The more we learn about God, the more we see him working, the more our faith should grow (Lk 17:5; Mk 9:24; 2 Th 1:3).

Before we leave the centurion and his servant, it would do us well to look at a subject that has caused much disagreement in the body of Christ.

The subject of healing brings much disagreement in our day. Some think anyone who has enough faith will be healed of any infirmity.

A thorough study of Jesus' healings will show us the following....

- There are times when people were healed when there was no faith exercised at all

Jesus simply healed them (Mat. 8:14-15; Mat. 8:16; Mat. 14:14; Mat. 15:30; Lk.6:19; Lk. 8:26-39; Lk, 9:11; Lk. 17:11-14). Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Certainly it was not Lazarus' faith that healed him.

- There are times when healing came because of the faith of the one who was sick

We can find examples of this (Mat. 8:2-4; Mat. 20:29-44; Jn. 9:1-7; Jn. 5:1-9).

- There are times when healing came because of the faith of someone other than the sick person

The centurion is a perfect example of this. There are other cases (Mat. 15:22-28; Mk. 2:2-12; 5:35-42).

- There are times when God refused to heal

Many times Jesus left cities with people who were still sick (Mat. 8:18). Paul asked God three times to remove his thorn in the flesh, but God refused (2 Cor. 12:8-9). God didn't heal Timothy of his stomach issues (1 Tim. 5:23).

We would do well to accept the fact that God always does right. There are times, in his wisdom, he allows us to get sick. He even uses sickness to accomplish his will. I rejoice in a God who does so. I'm glad we can trust him, even when we don't understand.

One of the saddest things about this subject is how so many people are being told that they should be healed. They are told if they had the faith, they would be healed of their sickness.

They are being told that they have some type of sin in their lives, or they would certainly be healed. They constantly hear that if they would simply "have faith" their sick loved ones, whom they have prayed for, would be healed.

How many of God's people are going through agony, not just because they are having to endure some sickness, but because someone has told them that if they were right with God they would not be sick to begin with?

This only compounds their problems. They not only have to deal with the sickness but also the guilt of thinking that they have failed the Lord.

JESUS HEALS PETER'S MOTHER IN LAW 8:14-15

*Mt 8:14-15 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.*

Jesus goes to Peter's house. He heals Peter's mother in law from a sickness that is described as a fever.

These verses let us know that Peter was married. You can't have a mother in law unless you're married.

We don't know much about Peter's mother in law, but I believe she was a godly woman. As soon as she is healed, she serves Jesus and those in the house.

What about Peter's wife? We aren't told her name. She isn't even mentioned in these verses. Some have suggested she had already died, but there is no proof of this. It seems that Peter took his wife with him on some of his evangelistic trips.

Paul talks about being able to "lead about" a wife in 1 Cor. 9:5. He's referring to those preachers who took their wives with them on their mission, or evangelistic trips. He says Peter's (Cephas) wife was one of the ones who traveled with her husband.

Once again, we see the compassion of Jesus in healing Peter's mother in law. He touches her hand. I can see him drawing close and being moved by her infirmity. His touch was a gentle, but powerful touch.

JESUS HEALS MANY 8:16-17

*Mt 8:16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:*

As we would expect, the word spreads quickly about a man who can heal. It's amazing how many show up when there's something for them.

There is no doubt he is weary from helping so many who have come to him. He needs rest, but he is still helping those who are in need.

These people came to Jesus, "*when the evening was come*". Mark 1:29-30 tells us this happened on the Sabbath. The Sabbath started on Friday at sundown and ended on Saturday at sundown. These people would not go where Jesus was until the Sabbath ended. The law said there was to be no work done on the Sabbath. The Jews thought healing was considered work. They also would not travel far on the Sabbath.

They are so concerned about not breaking the law, but they don't seem to be concerned about not obeying the words of Jesus.

Many in this crowd are possessed with demons. To be possessed by demons means the demons had actually taken up residence in the body of a person. For the most part, the demon controlled the person.

Demons are still active today.

In America, we may not see so much of the obvious demonic activity that took place in Jesus' day (inability to speak in Mat. 9:32; blindness in Mat. 12:22; seizures in Mat 17:15; supernatural strength in Mk. 5:3-4; screaming and self-mutilation in Mk. 5:5; deafness in Mk. 9:25; nakedness in Lk. 8:27).

But, that certainly does not mean demon activity has ceased. I'm convinced the devil and his demons are as active today as ever. The devil has learned that he can do more damage as an angel of light. The word of God says the devil has transformed himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). He is a counterfeiter. He tries to lead people. For example, he tells people they will go to heaven by being good. He draws people into the riches of this world to keep their minds off spiritual matters. He is an expert at what he does.

I do not believe a saved person can be possessed by demons. I just can't see the Holy Spirit and demons dwelling in the same body.

That certainly doesn't mean the devil has given up. The believer may not be able to be possessed, but they certainly can be oppressed. The devil will do all he can to deceive, distract, discourage, and defeat us.

The Lord said through Paul, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of the world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

Jesus cast out the demons with his word. The same word that created all things (Gen. 1:3), commanded these demons, and they had to obey.

Verse 16 said, "*and healed all that were sick*". This was one of the occasions when Jesus healed everyone who was brought to him. He did not always do this. There were times when he did not heal everyone.

*Mt 8:17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*

Jesus is referring to Isaiah 53:4-5. These verses are used by faith healers more than any other in an attempt to teach that physical healing is included in the atonement.

There is no doubt, when Jesus hung on the cross; he took upon himself all the sin of man. He had on him everything that sin had caused. His work on Calvary purchased all that Adam lost when he sinned.

However, there are many things that were provided by Calvary that we have not experienced yet and will not experience until we get to heaven.

The following is just a few of these things

- Jesus as Lord over all Eph 1:22; Heb 2:8
- Death done away with 1 Co 15:54-55
- The curse removed Re 21:1
- Glorified bodies 1 Co 15:53-54
- Sin totally done away with 2 Pe 3:13
- The devil's judgment Re 20:10

None of the things mentioned above have been realized as of yet. Since this is true, why is it so difficult to recognize that total health will not to be experienced until we get to heaven?

If Calvary provided healing that we are to experience here and now, then why are so many of God's people sick? Are we to assume that they are all out of God's will? Why do so many who preach perfect health have physical problems themselves?

If we are supposed to have to have perfect health as some have suggested, then we would never have any physical problems. There would be no need for eye glasses, hearing aids, we would never have headaches, toothaches, sore muscles, or even grow tired, no one would be overweight, or too skinny. If we are to experience perfect health, how would we die, since most death is the result of some type of sickness?

What about the sickness of Job? We know that Job was not in sin because Job 1:8 says he was a "perfect and an upright man". Job suffered physically like very few men ever have and it is clear that the Lord allowed it.

Even though God allowed the devil to attack Job, he recognized that his problems came from the Lord. In Job 1:21 we hear him saying, "the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD".

In the New Testament, Jesus said sickness can be for God's glory. He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby (Jn 11:4).

Timothy had continual stomach trouble. Yet, Paul doesn't rebuke him for being out of God's will. Instead, he tells him to drink wine in order to help his problems (1 Ti 5:23). This is equivalent to our getting some medicine for an ailment with which we might be suffering with.

Paul left Trophimus at Miletum sick (2 Ti 4:20). He gives no indication that it was wrong for this man to be sick, or that he was upset that he could not heal him.

James tells us what to do when we are sick (Jas 5:14). If we are promised healing, why are we told to call the elders and have them pray?

God refused to heal Paul of his thorn in the flesh (2 Co 12:7-10). He asked the Lord three times to remove this thorn, but the Lord refused to do so. Paul actually thanks the Lord for this thorn.

Why does God allow sickness?

- God uses sickness in order to teach us

There are some things that we cannot learn while we are on the mountain top. The Lord is more concerned about our spiritual man than our physical man. If need be, he will use a physical affliction in order to help mature us spiritually.

Job learned things about himself and God that he would never have learned if he had stayed well and prosperous. Paul clearly says that his thorn was sent in order to keep him humble (II Cor. 12:7). Through this infirmity he was taught that he needed the Lord.

- God uses sickness in order to touch us

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

- God uses sickness in order to turn us

There are times when the Lord uses sickness in order to chasten us. He does it in order to *turn* us around. Hosea 6:1, "He hath torn". The Lord made them sick. There were people who were sick because they had partaken of communion in an unworthy manner (1 Cor.11:30).

Conclusion: God's purpose is always what is most important. He will not abandon his purpose just to satisfy our desires. We can find many times in the bible where God refused to answer the requests of his people because he had a greater purpose (Ex. 33:20 / Deut. 3:26 / 1 Sam. 12:16-18 / Ezk. 20:3-4).

THE COST OF FOLLOWING THE KING 8:18-22

*Mt 8:18 Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.*

Multitudes come to see Jesus. They hear about his miracles, and come running. By this time Jesus has healed thousands of people. John tells us that he did many works that are not recorded in the bible. He said if all Jesus did was written in books, the world would not be able to contain all of them (Jn.20:30-31).

Jesus sees the multitudes, and prepares to go to the other side of the lake. He and his disciples were in Capernaum; they are about to leave and go to the other (east) side of the Sea of Galilee. They will go to the country of the Gadarenes (Mk. 5:1).

Jesus' popularity is growing, yet he does not seek the admiration of man. If anyone could have been a world leader, it would have been Jesus.

He had the power to amaze the multitudes. Through his miracles he could have had all men flocking to him. But, he is not seeking the fame of the world. He wants those who come to him to come because they see him as the answer to their spiritual needs.

*Mt 8:19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*

As Jesus and the disciples were preparing to board the boat to cross the lake a scribe comes expressing his desire to follow Jesus. He certainly sounds sincere for he says he is willing to follow Jesus anywhere he goes.

Not everyone was drawn to Jesus because of his miracles. There were some who genuinely wanted to follow him. However, Jesus makes it abundantly clear that anyone who wants to follow him should first count the cost. His life was not a life of glamour. The miracles and the crowds were exciting, but there was a lot more involved with being a disciple than miracles. The life of a true disciple was difficult. It was wonderful, it was fulfilling, but it was difficult. It still costs to be a disciple of Christ. It is worth the cost, but it still costs.

*Mt 8:20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

Any leader seeking fame would have jumped at the chance to have another follower. But, Jesus was not the average leader. He warns the scribe about the difficulty of being one of his followers. He wants those who are thinking about following him to count the cost of discipleship (Lk.14:28). He wants genuine disciples.

It's easy to make a decision in the heat of the moment. Many have been stirred by emotion and made commitments that weren't truly sincere. The Lord knows our heart. He knows if we mean business.

Jesus describes the details of being a disciple that are not so glamorous. He had no home of his own. He depended on others to provide him a place to stay when needed. Imagine, the God who spoke the universe into existence has no place to call home. We remember how he gave his life on the cross, and we should, but we should also remember how he lived a difficult life in a human body. He experiences the worst this world had to offer.

I'm not sure where people get the idea that Jesus was rich. He describes a life of trust, not a life of ease.

We are not told what the scribe decided. We don't know if he followed the Lord.

What is your decision? Have you decided to give the Lord your all? Have you decided to follow him no matter what the cost? No doubt, the life of discipleship is a difficult life. There are many trials and burdens. But, it is also the best life we will experience while in this world. In spite of the difficulties, walking with the Lord is a wonderful experience. His grace sustains us, his love comforts us, and his presence embraces us.

When our life is over and we stand before the Lord, our declaration shall be, "it was worth it all".



Jesus' manner of gathering disciples was totally different than what we are taught today. The so-called soul winner of today does whatever it takes to get a person to pray a prayer. They speak of salvation as the way to get everything you have ever dreamed of. Even though Jesus' message centered on repentance, there is little or no mention of the need to repent of sin in the message of today's seeker of souls.

I am grieved by the modern methods of so-called soul winning. I know we do not know the hearts of the people we talk to. I am aware of the fact that salvation is by grace through faith. But, if the person we talk to is not under conviction, they cannot be saved. Jesus said no man could come to him except the Father draw him (Jn.6:44). Salvation is not something we can just grab when we want it. It is the result of the convicting power of God in the heart of a repentant sinner.

Jesus calls himself the "Son of man" in verse 20. The phrase Son of man is used 84 times in the gospels. It is a title Jesus used to refer to himself. His disciples never referred to him by this title. An examination of the gospels will show us that Jesus referred to himself most often as the Son of man, and not as the Son of God.

The title Son of man means what we might expect. It is used to remind us that Jesus was a man. He was 100% God, but he was also 100% human. However, the title "Son of man" means more than the fact that Jesus was a man. The term "Son of man" is found in Dan. 7:13-14. In those verses the Son of man is exalted. It makes it clear that the Son of man is God.

The same is true in the New Testament. Several references to the Son of man deal with Jesus' power and authority (Jn.5:27; Mat.24:30; Mat. 26:64; Mk.13:24-27; Lk.21:27).

On at least two occasions in the bible, the Son of man is said to exist before he was born in a human body (Jn.3:13; Jn.6:62). This certainly reminds us that Jesus was God, and he is eternal.

So, we find the title "Son of man" speaks of the fact that Jesus was a man. But, it also speaks of how he, being God, will one day set up a kingdom on earth, where he will rule and reign.

*Mt 8:21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

Another person who had been following Jesus (not one of the twelve) comes with a request. His request reveals how his commitment to Christ is limited.

The word "disciple" means a learner. It simply means someone was learning from Jesus. Multitudes followed him and were therefore called disciples. Only a few of those were true followers of Christ.

This man is called a disciple because he is following Jesus. However, when Jesus started to leave his neighborhood, he began to have second thoughts. This verse reminds us of how there were many who followed the Lord as long as it didn't cost them anything.

This "disciple" asked Jesus to allow him to first bury his father before he followed. This verse has been greatly misunderstood. In our western way of thinking, we assume this man's father has died, and he simply wants to make sure he gets a proper burial before he follows Jesus. This is not possible for it was their custom to bury the dead the same day they died. Had his father just died, it would be very doubtful that he would be where Jesus was.

These verses speak of the custom of that day whereby the son was expected to take care of his parents until their death. Even though the care of his father was important, it should have not been as important as obeying the call of God.

*Mt 8:22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.*

Jesus' response seems harsh. He is telling this man to let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead.

We must keep in mind, Jesus is thinking of eternal matters. Caring for our families is vitally important. We are admonished by the word of God to do so (Ps. 127:3; Pro. 1:8; Pro.22:6; 1 Tim.5:8; Titus 2:4; Eph.6:1-4). But, caring about the things of God is more important.

Jesus was trying to get us to realize, as important as the matters of earth can be, they are not as important as the things of heaven. The souls of the lost are more important than the care of the elderly.

We must realize, if this man followed Jesus, the Lord would certainly make sure that his father was be cared for. He is the God of heaven and earth; he can certainly take care of dear old dad.

Luke's record of this occasion lets us know that Jesus is not merely asking this man to follow him. His call to this man is the call to preach the word of God (Lk.9:60).

The call to follow the Lord should take precedence over anything and everything else in our lives.

Be honest with yourself, how important is God's will in your life? Where does he fit on your priority list?

## THIS KING HAS POWER OVER STORMS 8:23-27

*Mt 8:23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.*

Jesus and his disciples board a ship. They were in Capernaum; now they are going to the other (east) side of the Sea of Galilee. They are heading toward the country of the Gadarenes.

Notice how this verse is worded. Jesus entered the ship, and his disciples followed him. That ought to be the way we live our lives. We should simply follow the Lord. Where the Spirit of God leads us, we should follow. What he leads us to say, we should say.

What he leads us to do, we should do, no questions asked.

Jesus is about to reveal his power again. He has touched many bodies and healed many diseases, but now he will show he has control over nature itself.

*Mt 8:24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.*

Storms arise quickly and without notice on the Sea of Galilee. Such a storm comes as Jesus and the disciples are in the midst of the sea.

The humanity of Christ is seen here.

He was so tired he was asleep in the middle of a terrible storm. His ministry to others had exhausted him. He was weary.

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

*Mt 8:25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.*

The disciples awaken Jesus. Jesus had peace, but his disciple certainly didn't. They were terrified. We should remember, some of his disciples were fishermen. All of them were probably used to ships and storms. This had to be an awful storm if seasoned fishermen were afraid. They had seen many storms before. But they had not seen a storm like this one. I personally believe the devil was trying to kill them all. When Jesus calms the storm, the bible says, he "rebuked" the winds and the sea.

*Mt 8:26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.*

Jesus rebukes the disciples for being afraid. This may seem somewhat harsh to us. I mean, they were in a severe storm, there was real danger, and they could have easily drowned. But, were they really in danger? We must keep one thing in mind; Jesus was on the ship with them. When Jesus is on board it doesn't matter how bad the storm is, it doesn't matter how hard the wind blows, it doesn't matter how much rain falls, the storm can do us no harm. That ship could not have sunk no matter how severe the storm.

Notice, Jesus gets straight to the root of the problem. The disciples were afraid because of their lack of faith. I'm glad we have a God who will deal with our failures. I'm glad he tells us the truth about ourselves.

If Jesus can have such peace in the middle of a storm, so can we. He had peace because he knew his father was taking care of the situation. We who know the Lord have the same God watching over us. We need not fear no matter what the circumstance.

Jesus rebuked the disciples, and then he rebuked the storm. The disciples were more difficult to control than the storm.

The disciples had seen Jesus do so many miracles. It looks like they would not have doubted him. But, how many times do we doubt him even though he has done so many wonderful things for us?

One thing is certain, if they were not supposed to be afraid even though they were in a tremendously dangerous storm, surely we should never be afraid no matter what we face.

The word "rebuke" has the idea of forbidding. He forbid the storm to continue. He put a muzzle on the storm. Mark tells us the actual words he spoke, "Peace be still" (Mk.4:39).

Notice, his word brought peace. He still speaks peace to us through the written word.

The disciples didn't know where they were headed when they boarded the ship, but Jesus did. The disciples didn't know there was a storm ahead, but Jesus did. The disciples didn't know if they would make it through the storm once it hit, but Jesus did.

We may not know what's ahead, but Jesus does. Since he knows, that should be enough. He is well aware of what's ahead. We can trust him totally. Our storms can be severe, but we can still depend on him.

When Jesus calmed the sea, there was "a great calm". The word "calm" has the idea of tranquility. The storm didn't just quit, but there was an overwhelming tranquility. The sea itself laid down. Usually the waters stay agitated for a while after a storm. Not this time. The calm after the storm was as overwhelming as the turbulence during the storm.

*Mt 8:27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!*

The men "marvelled" at what they saw. It means they were astonished. They recognized the fact that what happened was impossible. No other man could make the wind and rain obey.

His power is just as miraculous today. His word is just as powerful today. My friend, all he has to do is speak, and your situation will be changed.

I personally believe the Lord wanted the disciples to trust him through the storm. It was wonderful that he calmed the storm. But, I believe it would have been even more wonderful if they had trusted him all the way to the other side.

How their faith could have increased if they simply let him take care of them all the way through the storm. No doubt, there were more storms coming later. They could have faced the next storm with faith had they just trusted him in this storm.

It's great when God takes our problems away, but it is even better when he gives us grace to endure the problems.

There are times he wants us to endure difficulties. God sends troubles in order to teach us to trust him (Dt. 8:2; Isa. 48:10; 1 Pet. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:12; Jam. 1:3-4). We should trust him to give us his grace to see us through to victory.

**THIS KING HAS POWER OVER SATAN 8:28-34**

*Mt 8:28 And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.*

Jesus and his disciples get to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, and near the city of Gadara. The city of Gadara was populated mostly by those from the tribe of Gad. When God told the Jews to cross the Jordan River and possess the Promised Land, Gad was one of the tribes that asked to be excused. They, along with the tribe of Rueben, and half of the tribe of Manasseh, stayed on the east side of the river (Num. 32).

It is possible the swine mentioned in these verses belonged to some Gentiles who lived in the area, but it is more likely they belonged to the people of Gad.

No occupation could have been worse for a Jew. The Old Testament declared pigs to be unclean. The average Jew would not even come in contact with a pig, let alone become a pig farmer. Disobedience will take us further down than we expect.

Two men possessed by demons come to meet Jesus. Mark and Luke mention only one of these men (Mk. 5:2; Lk. 8:27). The one they mention was probably the worst of the two.

Mark tells us these men met Jesus "immediately" when the boat pulled to shore. It is possible that these men were watching when Jesus calmed the storm in verse 26. Since they lived outside, they had probably watched many storms on the Sea of Galilee. But, this time it was different. They had never seen anyone calm a storm. Perhaps, this is what drew them to Jesus in the first place.

The bible gives a good bit of detail about the lives of these men. Mark and Luke describe one of these men, but I believe we can safely assume that all of the characteristics mentioned were true of both men.

- These men were possessed by demons

Demons are fallen angels who followed Lucifer when he tried to overthrow God (Rev. 12:9). One third of the angels foolishly believed Lucifer, and followed him (Rev. 12:3-4).

Some of the demons are already locked in chains of darkness, (Jude 6) awaiting their judgment. Others of the demons have a limited freedom to travel about the universe (Eph. 6:12). The demons still get their directions from the devil.

All the demons will eventually be cast into the lake of fire along with the devil (Rev. 20:10).

Like the devil, demons are the enemies of God and God's people. In conjunction with the devil, they do all they can to hinder the work of God.

Demons can enter a person if that person opens their minds and will to the work of the devil.

A saved person cannot be possessed by demons, but they certainly can be oppressed by the devil, and the demons. That's why it is so important that we guard our minds against the works of Satan.

- These men lived in the tombs

The Jews buried their dead in hewn out rocks, or in caves. These men must have had a fascination about death. It's amazing how those who reject the way of life are many times drawn to the things of death.

- These men wore no clothes

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

- These men were strong

Mark says one of these men had often been bound with fetters and chains, but he broke them in pieces (Mk.5:3-4). It is quite possible that both of these men had this unusual strength given by the demons.

- These men were in torment

Mark tells us one of these men was "crying, and cutting himself with stones" (Mk.5:5). Sin brings torment.

- These men were dangerous

Matthew said one of these men was "exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way". The word "fierce" means furious. These men had an embedded anger that had not been dealt with.

*Mt 8:29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*

We discover a good bit of information about demons in these verses.

- The demons know who Jesus is

They call him, "Jesus, thou Son of God". These demons probably knew more about the Jesus than we do. How we need to learn more about Jesus. He is the God of all heaven and earth. He is the one who gives victory to those who trust him (1 Cor.15:57).

These demons are more aware of the authority of Jesus than we are. They tremble in his presence.

- The demons know God has power over them

They don't try to defend themselves. They know better than to try to stand against the Lord. I wish we would understand what these demons understood. I wish we would see how much power our Lord has. I wish we would recognize the fact that Jesus has won the victory over the devil, and all his demons (Col.2:15).

- The demons know there is coming a day of judgment

They asked Jesus if he was going to "torment" them "before the time".

There is a day set when all the demons will stand before God. He will cast them all into the lake of fire. This should remind us who know the Lord that we are on the winning side. We need to start acting like it.

- They know the time of judgment had not yet come

Even though the devil, or the demons, cannot tell the future, they do know what the bible teaches. They probably know more about the bible than the average Christian. They know the bible talks about certain signs that will come before Jesus returns. They knew those signs had not yet been manifested, so they knew the time of judgment was not yet.

We should study and learn more about the end time events, so we will be ready for his coming.

*Mt 8:30 And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.*

There was a herd of pigs within eye sight of Jesus and these demon possessed men.

*Mt 8:31 So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.*

The demons asked Jesus to cast them into the pigs. Luke tells us they asked this because they did not want Jesus to cast them into the "deep" (Lk. 8:31).

The “deep” is speaking of the prison where some demons have already been placed (2 Pet.2:4; Jude 6).

Notice, the demons had to ask Jesus to send them to the pigs. The devil and all the demons are still under the authority of the God of heaven. He still has to get permission from God before he can attack one of God’s children (Job 1:6-13).

Mark tells us more about this conversation between Jesus and the demons. Jesus addresses one of the demons, and asks his name. The demon replies, “My name is Legion: for we are many” (Mk.5:9-10). A legion in the Roman army consisted of 6,000 soldiers. We can’t be absolutely certain that this meant there were 6,000 demons in this man, but we can be sure it means there were many demons.

Mark tells us there were 2,000 pigs (Mk.5:13). There must have been at least 2,000 demons for there had to be at least one demon in each pig.

*Mt 8:32 And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.*

If there is anything this teaches us, it is the fact that the devil’s desire is to harm and destroy. The demons had wanted to harm or destroy the men just as they destroyed the pigs. Harm and destruction is always the devil’s desire and intention (Jn.10:10).

Mark tells us more about the condition of these men after the demons were cast out. The one man Mark emphasizes was found “sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind” (Mk.5:13). What a difference Jesus makes. The men, who were tormented, are now at peace. The men who caused harm to themselves and others, are no longer angry. They had gone without clothes, but now they are dressed.

*Mt 8:33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.*

The keepers of the pigs go and tell everyone in the city and the country what Jesus had done (Mk.5:14).

*Mt 8:34 And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.*

Instead of being thrilled about the deliverance of the demon possessed men, they were upset about their pigs. Their business took a loss, and they didn’t like it. That was not the first or last time people have chosen money instead of the Lord.

This may be the reason why the demons wanted to be driven into the pigs. By causing their death, they caused trouble for Jesus.

We see in the next verse, Jesus did as they requested. He left. God will not force himself on anyone who doesn’t want him.

I have often wondered, where did the demons go after the pigs perished? One thing is certain, they are still somewhere in this world, still trying to cause trouble.

#### JESUS HEALS A PARALYZED MAN 9:1-8

Jesus continues his working of miracles to demonstrate his authority and power. However, he is about to do something he has not done before. He is going to forgive sins.

To this point, Jesus was known as a preacher, a teacher, a miracle worker, but now he forgives sin. To say the least, this will stir up controversy.

*Mt 9:1 And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.*

Jesus left the country of the Gadarenes and went to Capernaum.

We need to have same mindset that Jesus had. He was asked to leave by a bunch of pig farmers, but he did not quit. He continued to do good, he continued to preach, he kept doing his father’s will. There will be times when people reject us, and our message, but we should not quit. There are others who will want to hear. Keep going, keep telling, keep doing right, no matter what.

Capernaum was the place where Jesus called home for the time being (cf. Mat. 4:13). It seems as though he stayed at Peter’s house while in Capernaum (Mat. 8:14).

*Mt 9:2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*

This is one of most wonderful examples of compassion in the bible. Four men (Mk.2:3) had a burden for this man. They cared enough about this paralytic to where they went to extreme measures to get him to Jesus. Mark and Luke give us a more detailed description of this event.

These men actually tore up the roof of the house to get the sick man to Jesus (Mk.2:3-12 and Lk.5:18-26).

Jesus addresses the most important of this man's needs. He deals with his sin issues. God is concerned about our physical needs, but he is more concerned about our spiritual needs. To have the power to remove sickness was wonderful, but how much better to be able to remove sin.

Jesus tells the man to "be of good cheer" because his sins have been forgiven. What great a delight it is to know that our sins are forgiven. It is a thrill to realize the God of heaven holds nothing against us. We are no longer chargeable because he has declared us innocent of our sin.

Our brother, H.G. Spafford knew what he was saying when he wrote, "My sin, not in part but the whole, Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul".

These events are the result of the faith of the four men. This verse says, "Jesus seeing their faith". They believed Jesus could help their friend. Their faith moved them to bring the sick man to Jesus. Their faith caused them to break up the roof. Their faith moved the Lord to heal him. In like fashion, our faith moves God. Without faith, it is impossible to please him (Heb.11:6).

*Mt 9:3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.*

As usual, someone had to complain about what Jesus is doing. The scribes accuse Jesus of blasphemy. The word blaspheme means to speak evil against, or to injure with words. To blaspheme God would be to speak in a way that would dishonor his name.

Blasphemy also has the idea of claiming to do something that only God can do. That is what the scribes were accusing Jesus of doing. Only God can forgive sin. The fact is, they were right.

If Jesus was not God, he would have been guilty of blasphemy. But, he was God, and therefore, able to forgive sin.

*Mt 9:4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?*

They had said nothing aloud, but Jesus knew their thoughts. This also, is something only God can do. He knows our thoughts also.

*Mt 9:5 For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?*

There has been much discussion about Jesus' comment in this verse. When Jesus said "whether is easier", was he referring to forgiving the man's sin, or healing the man's sickness?

I personally believe Jesus was referring to forgiving the man's sin when he said "whether is easier". I think his sin problem, just like with all of us, was much more difficult to fix than his body.

There is no greater miracle on earth, than the miracle of being forgiven.

The damage of sin is worse than the damage any physical affliction can cause. The hold of sin is severe. It would do us well to recognize how wonderful the miracle of forgiveness is. If God has forgiven your sin, you have experienced the most wonderful miracle ever. Thank the Lord!

*Mt 9:6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.*

Jesus heals the man. In essence, his ability to do the second miracle (healing) proved he was able to do the first miracle (forgiving). The external miracle was proof of the internal miracle.

Once again, Jesus proves he is who he claims to be. The scribes could not refute what had happened for the man was obviously healed. Jesus' work took away any argument they could have offered. In fact, their attempt to discredit Jesus backfired. By showing he had power to heal, he was also showing his power to forgive sin.

I love it when the Lord shuts down the arguments of the world. Try as they may, they are no match to the almighty God of heaven.

Jesus' wording ("the Son of man hath power") shows us he meant the power to forgive, and to heal was within himself. He did not just receive the power from God, he was God.

These verses teach us only God can really forgive sin. Someone may steal from us. Later, they come to ask our forgiveness, and even return what they stole. We can forgive them. However, that does not do away with their sin. We can forgive them for their injustice to us, but that does not absolve their wrong. In wronging us, they sinned against us, and against God. Only God can truly forgive and absolve sin. I'm glad our sins are *gone*.

Jesus told him to take the old, dirty, stinking pallet he had laid on. It was a testimony to all who saw him.

They had seen him lying on that bed for a long time. Now, he's walking, and that old pallet is a sign of a God who can change lives.

*Mt 9:7 And he arose, and departed to his house.*

The power of God touched this man, he was totally healed. He did as Jesus said, he went home. I would have loved to have seen his family when he first walked through the door.

I'm glad he didn't head to the closet beer joint, or the closest temple to a false god. When God touches us, we are different. We don't do what we used to do (2 Cor.5:17).

*Mt 9:8 But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.*

Jesus' work had done what he intended. Many believed. Unfortunately, many still refused to believe. Nothing had changed. God reveals his mighty works every day, but so many reject his work, and walk on in spiritual blindness.

#### THE KING CALLS MATTHEW 9:9-13

Every king has his subjects. Every leader has those who follow. But, this king is not your average king. This king chooses the most unlikely people. He did not choose from the who's who of society. He picked the ones who no one else would have chosen.

One reason why he chose who he did was that God might get the glory for what was done through them. He still picks those who most would discard (1 Co 1:27; 1 Co 1:29; 2 Co 12:9-10; 2 Co 3:5).

*Mt 9:9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.*

Jesus calls Matthew (the writer of the book of Matthew). Matthew was a Jew. This verse helps to prove the bible is the word of God, and not of man. Had Matthew been the author of these words he certainly would have used words like, I, me, or mine. Instead, he pens down what the Holy Spirit told him to write and put no emphasis on himself.

Matthew was sitting "at the receipt of custom". That tells us he was a tax collector. The receipt of custom was the place where the Romans collected taxes. Tax collectors were hated by all people, especially by the Jews.

The Romans expected taxes to be paid. Many tax collectors would demand the people pay more than the Romans required. Then they would keep the extra for themselves. To make matters worse, many of the tax collectors were Jews themselves. So the Jews were being cheated by fellow Jews.

You can hardly blame the Jews for despising the tax collectors. Many of them were living in poverty. How would you feel if you can barely feed your family, and a fellow Jew is cheating you?

Jesus simply says, "follow me", and Matthew did. We must not exclude the work of the Holy Spirit in his call, or his obedience. The Holy Spirit moved in the heart of Matthew, and he listened. Many have heard that call since then.

Some would say it takes a lot of courage to leave everything behind like Matthew did. However, when the Holy Spirit calls, he gives grace to follow. There's nothing as sweet as following the leading of our Lord.

Some might ask why anyone would leave the comforts of home and go as a missionary to the jungles of Africa. The answer is simple. If God puts that burden in one of his children, they not only will be willing to go, they will want to go. The person doing what God asks will be happier in the dark jungles of Africa, than in the luxuries of America.

It's important to keep in mind. God's protection and provision is for those who are in his will. When we are where the Lord wants us, he will protect and provide. If we step out of his will, we cannot be sure of either his protection or provision.

*Mt 9:10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.*

Jesus is invited to a meal at the house of an unnamed friend. Matthew does not tell us whose house it is, but Luke lets us know that it is Matthew's house (Lk.5:29). Once again we see the leadership of the Holy Spirit in Matthew not mentioning his own name.

Many "publicans and sinners" came to this gathering. In all probability, these were some of Matthew's friends from his old life. Luke tells us Matthew invited them (Lk5:29). No doubt, Matthew wanted them to hear the words of Christ.

This is a commendable action. Even though we are admonished to avoid those who do not walk in a godly manner (Ps.1:1; Pro.1:10; Pro.4:14; 2 Cor.6:14-18; Jam.4:4), that does not mean we should not try our best to win them to Christ. Jesus certainly was a friend of sinners.

We should be friends enough to win them but not close enough to be affected by their lifestyle. Many Christians have so isolated themselves they have no contact with those who are lost. We should guard ourselves from the world, but as Christians we are admonished to “go out into the highways and hedges” (Lk.14:23).

*Mt 9:11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?*

An orthodox Jew would not associate with such sinners as these. Notice, they asked the disciples instead of going directly to Jesus.

*Mt 9:12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

Jesus responded to their question. His entire mission on earth is summarized in what he says here. He came to help those who needed help (Lk.19:10; Lk.15:4-7; Lk.15:32; Mt.18:11).

Jesus said those who are well do not need a physician. He saw himself as a spiritual physician. He came to those who could not help themselves.

Jesus not only speaks of the sick in this verse, but he speaks of the physician. Of course, he was the physician he was referring to. A physician is the one who has the knowledge and ability to assist those who are sick.

Sin is pictured as sickness in the bible (Ps.41:4; Ps.6:3; Ps.103:3).

Jesus is the great physician. He is the only one who can heal our sin sickness.

The Pharisees thought they did not have any need of help. They truly believed they lived good enough to please God. Oh how, they missed it.

*Mt 9:13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

Jesus said, “go and learn what that meaneth”. This was a common phrase used as a rebuke to those who did not know something they should have known.

The only hope they have is to accept what Jesus said. He did not change his words to accommodate their beliefs. He never will.

*Jesus’ statement for them to learn what he meant implies there was something they were ignorant about. Their eyes needed to be opened. He told them to go away until they learned this. Until they learned they were in need of the great physician they could not be helped.*

There is no help for the person who will not admit they have a need. Jesus said he came to call the sinners to repentance, not the righteous. Those who think they are righteous think they have no need to repent.

Jesus also said when they learned they were sinners he would have mercy. God would much rather act in mercy than in judgment. He has no delight in having to deal with the wicked (Eze 33:11).

He was and is “calling sinners to repentance”. The word “repentance” means reversal. It literally means to turn around and go in a different direction. True repentance starts in the heart. No one will repent until they recognize they have sinned against a holy God. Real repentance involves brokenness about our sin. The publican would not even look toward heaven as he cried “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Lk.18:13).

Repentance is not turning over a new leaf, nor is it a work of the flesh. Repentance comes from a work of conviction accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the sinning person. The Holy Spirit convicts the person of their behavior. As a result, they are sorry for who they are and what they have done. They “turn” from their sin and to the Lord for forgiveness.

Some believe repentance is merely a change of mind about our sin. Repentance is a change of mind, but it is more than that. A drunk may change his mind about drinking when he wakes up with a hangover. He may say, “I’m never going to drink again”. This does not necessarily mean he has repented. He is just sorry that his drinking has made he feel so bad. He will probably get drunk again.

But, if that same drunk wakes up and sees his drinking as sin. He will say, “I’m never going to drink again”. This time he not only sees his drinking as something that makes him feel bad, he sees his drinking as a sin. He turns from his drinking and to God because he wants to be forgiven. This is repentance.



Some believe salvation can be received by simply believing and repentance is not necessary. They cite verses like Acts 16:30-31 in an attempt to prove their point. In those verses, the jailer asks Paul, "what must I do to be saved". Paul answers by saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved". These folks are quick to point out that Paul told the jailer he had to believe and did not say anything about repenting. But they miss one important factor. The jailer was obviously already under conviction. He came in "trembling". There was no reason for Paul to tell this man he needed to repent. It was obvious that he was already repenting. That's why he asked what he had to do in order to be saved.

Repentance is more than just feeling sorry for our sin. Judas was sorry, but he did not repent (Mat.27:3).

Repentance is not reformation. Many people make a promise to stop their bad habits every New Year. However, most New Year's resolutions don't last more than a couple of days.

Simply put, repentance is turning away from sin but it is also turning to the Lord. Repentance is necessary for true salvation.

The God of heaven longs for sinners to come to him, but they must come his way. God says to the sinner, "Seek ye the LORD", but he also says "Let the wicked forsake his way" (Isa. 55:6-7). He says "Wash you, make you clean" but he says in the same verse, "put away the evil of your doings" (Isa.1:16).

The New Testament says the same. Those who are lost are told, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..." (Acts 3:19). Many other verses speak of the need to repent (Pro.28:13; Ezk.3:19; 18:21; 18:27; 33:16; Hos.1:2; Lk.15:10; Jn.3:8; Acts 26:20; Jam.4:8-10).

#### JESUS ANSWERS QUESTIONS ABOUT FASTING 9:14-15

*Mt 9:14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?*

These are the disciples of John the baptist. According to Luke, the ones who asked this question were the same ones who had been talking with Jesus (Lk.5:30-33). It seems as though the Pharisees and the disciples of John agreed together to ask this question of Jesus.

It certainly surprises us to discover the disciples of John and the Pharisees have teamed up. We must realize, it is probable that John has already been placed in prison by this time (Lk.3:19-20) and his disciples are struggling to understand.

John the baptist was actually the last Old Testament prophet. He was the forerunner of the Messiah (Lk.1:17). A forerunner went before an official in an attempt to prepare the people for his arrival.

John pointed people to Jesus. He made it very clear that he was not the Messiah (Jn.1:23-27; 1:29-30; 3:28-31; Acts 19:4). In spite of all John did to point people to Jesus there were some who refused to follow Jesus. Some of them even got jealous of Jesus but John still points them toward the Lord (Jn.3:26-31).

Some of John's disciples were wondering why they and the Pharisees fasted but Jesus' disciples did not fast. John's disciples did as their leader, they fasted often.

The Pharisees were the strictest sect among the Jews. They fasted often but many of them did it to impress and not for spiritual reasons (Mat.6:16-18). They fasted about trivial matters. The Jews were instructed to fast once a year at the Day of Atonement (Lev.23:26-32).

We should note, Jesus did fast at least once that we know of, but he did it privately (Mat.4:1-2).

Fasting should not be a discarded practice. I'm convinced it has a viable part in our lives today. It should be done privately and as the Holy Spirit leads us.

The bible has much to say about fasting (Neh.1:4; Ezra 9:5-8 and 8:21-22; 2 Sam.12:15-17; 2 Chr. 20:2-3; Isa.58:6; Ps. 35:13-14 and 69:10; Dan.10:3; Mat.4:2 and 6:16-18; Acts 13:3 and 14:23).

*Mt 9:15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.*

Jesus explains his comments about fasting by referring to a wedding celebration. The Jewish wedding celebration lasted a week. No one would be expected to fast during such a joyous occasion. It would actually be considered rude to do so.

While Jesus (the bridegroom) was with his disciples. It was a time of celebration, not a time to fast. There is coming a time when "*the bridegroom shall be taken from them*". This is the first mention in the book of Matthew about Jesus' death and departure. The time will come when his disciples will have plenty to fast about. The days of joy would not last forever.

Fasting, rightly done, was connected to times of sorrow and fervent prayer. There was too much joy while Jesus walked the earth for them to fast. Also, fasting is done when we want to seek the Lord. His disciples didn't have to seek him for he was with them.

When the bridegroom is taken away then is the time to fast. The day will come when Jesus' disciples will fast. After Calvary, his disciples will have plenty to fast about.

#### THE TWO COVENANTS 9:16-17

*Mt 9:16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.*

Jesus gives two illustrations to explain what was happening. Jesus' words also are intended to inform those who were listening about a change that was about to take place. The Old Testament system has fulfilled what it was intended to do. The New Testament system is coming.

He is trying to get them understand about the two covenants. The Old and New Testaments are both ordained by God, but they are totally different. Jesus wants them to understand the two cannot be mixed. Law and grace will not mix.

His first illustration was that of a garment. Especially in their day, they did not mix fabrics. They would not use a new piece of material to repair a tear in an old garment. When the garment was washed, the new fabric would shrink and tear the garment, making the whole worse.

Jesus lets them know a new day has come. The Old Testament system had fulfilled its purpose. The Lord has come, bringing with him the new and better way (Gal.3:19; Heb.7:22; 9:15; 12:24)

*Mt 9:17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.*

Jesus' second illustration was that of wine bottles. The wine bottles of Jesus' day were made of sheep, goat, or ox skin. After time these skins would become brittle and would rupture easily. When new wine was put in old bottles, it would ferment, expand and burst the bottle. A bottle made of new skins was flexible and strong enough to withstand this expansion.

As already stated, Jesus is trying to get them to understand how you cannot mix two totally different things. The old covenant was good; it accomplished what God intended it to do. But the new was coming and would replace the old.

Notice what Jesus says about "*both are preserved*". What a wonder these words are. The Old and New Testaments have their place. Even though the Old is fulfilled by the New, that does not mean it had no value (Mat.5:17-18). The Law shows us we are sinners (Rom.3:19). It shows us our good works are not good enough (Rom.7:7). It points us to Jesus and his work on Calvary (Rom.10:4; Gal.2:16, 3:24).

The New brings us grace (Jn.8:32; 8:36, Rom.5:20-21, 8:2).

As wonderful as the Law is, we must move on to the New Testament. We are no longer under the Law (Gal.3:25).

#### JESUS DOES MORE MIRACLES 9:18-34

*Mt 9:18 While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.*

While Jesus was still speaking, "*there came a certain ruler*", telling Jesus about his daughter. Luke tells us this ruler's name is Jairus and he had only one daughter who was twelve years old (Lk.8:40-42).

Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue. A ruler of the synagogue was responsible for looking after the building, its contents, and the arrangements for the services.

Mark says Jairus' daughter is at the point of death (Mk.5:23). No doubt, when Jairus left to find Jesus his daughter was in such bad shape he realizes that she may have already died. He is saying she is dying or already dead. Luke tells us as they were heading to Jairus' house they received word that the girl had died. (Lk.8:49).

Jairus came and worshipped Jesus. He realized his only hope was Jesus. How heart breaking this must have been. No doubt, Jairus loved his daughter. She was his little girl. Somehow, he had heard about what Jesus had done for others. He believed he could do the same type of thing for him.

Jairus realized how hopeless the situation was. He had no power to help the one he loved. If Jesus didn't help, there was nowhere else to turn.

Dear friend, what problem is there in your life that you cannot fix? Will you believe as Jairus did? Will you take that need to the only one who can help you?

*Mt 9:19 And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.*

How it must have thrilled Jairus when Jesus rises and follows him. As far as we know, Jesus didn't speak a word; he "*arose, and followed him*". His disciples followed. I'm so glad we have a God who comes where we are. It's one thing for us to follow Jesus, but here we find him following the one in need.

JESUS HEALS A WOMAN WITH AN ISSUE OF BLOOD 9:20-22

*Mt 9:20 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment:*

As they are on the way to Jairus' house a woman with an issue of blood touches Jesus. The lady had been afflicted with this problem for twelve years. She had spent all she had on doctors who could not help her (Mk.5:25-28; Lk.8:43-48).

*Mt 9:21 For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.*

She believed if she could merely touch the hem of his garment she would be healed. The hem spoken of here was probably one of the four tassels sewn at the bottom corners of garments as described in Num.15:38 and Dt. 22:12.

Mark 5:29 says she was healed immediately of her plague. Her physical healing had taken place, but Jesus is not finished with his work on her.

*Mt 9:22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.*

Luke tells us more about the conversation between Jesus and this lady (Lk.8:43-48). Jesus asked "*who touched me*". The disciples were surprised he would notice anyone touching him since there were crowds of people pressing against them. Jesus knew power had gone from him so he asked who touched him.

This does not imply that Jesus had no control over his power. There is no doubt; Jesus was always, totally in control.

Many of the multitudes had touched the Lord that day. There was only one who touched him by faith. Do we touch him by faith? When we pray, do we expect him to answer? I'm afraid we doubt even when we pray?

Mark says she came "*fearing and trembling*".

Jesus said, "*Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole*". Does this mean she got saved at this point? It is difficult to be certain but it sure does seem so. She was healed from her infirmity the instant she touched Jesus so it would seem Jesus is speaking of more than physical healing at this point.

This conversation must have been torment for Jairus. I'm sure he was not untouched by the condition of this lady, but his focus was on his daughter. We would do well to learn from this. Jesus had the situation very much in control. Aren't you glad your Savior is able to help you and the millions of others who need his help, at the exact same moment?

JESUS RAISES JAIRUS' DAUGHTER 9:23-26

*Mt 9:23 And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,*

They continue to Jairus' house to find people mourning the death of his daughter. It was common to have paid mourners at funerals. These "mourners" would cry, wail and cry out the name of the deceased. The "minstrels" were flute players.

The quickness of their moving in on this child's death shows they had no sympathy. They simply wanted to make their money and leave as quickly as possible.

This certainly doesn't mean there were none there who are truly heart broken. Jairus would not have traveled to find Jesus had he not loved his daughter. No doubt, many others truly were heart-broken.

*Mt 9:24 He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.*

Jesus, more or less, just told them to get out of his way. He shocked them all by announcing that the girl was not really dead, but only asleep. Of course, they did not believe the Lord. They had touched the dead body. They had begun the preparations for burial.

Jesus said she wasn't dead but merely asleep. He is not saying they had made a mistake in thinking she was dead. He is saying she will be alive soon.

I am so glad that our problems are not difficult to him. Of course, she was really dead but that meant nothing to him. He was about to wake her from death. Even death has no power of the Lord of life.

They laughed and scorned him. So is the heart of the unbeliever. They can see only what is factual. They don't see beyond the problem. They see things only as they are, not as God can make them.

*Mt 9:25 But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.*

She, who was dead, is now alive. What a wonder. I'd love to hear what the scoffers had to say now. I'd sure like to have seen Jairus' response.

*Mt 9:26 And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.*

As with Jesus' other miracles, those who saw what happened told everyone they knew.

Some interesting points about the raising of Jairus' daughter.

- The need was great

You can't find a worse problem than being dead. What problem do you have that is impossible?

- Most of the people had given up

They were preparing for a funeral, not a miracle. They laughed and scorned Jesus when he dared to say there was hope.

- One man still believed

As far as we know, Jairus was the only one who believed.

Maybe no one else believes your problem can be fixed. They may think you are refusing to face reality. Maybe it is impossible. Maybe it seems that all hope is gone. But remember Jesus is still able.

- No one could deny what happened

Can we not trust our God? Where are the ones who will believe the impossible? When will someone finally believe that God is still God?

One thing is certain, when he moves, when he works, when he does what can't be done, even those who did not believe will have to admit....IT WAS GOD!

JESUS HEALS TWO BLIND MEN 9:27-34

*Mt 9:27 And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.*

Only Matthew records this account of these blind men being healed. This is the first account in the New Testament of Jesus healing the blind. There was no instance in the Old Testament of a blind person receiving their sight. This truly was an outstanding miracle.

Notice, there were two blind men. We are not told who they were but somehow these two men had found each other. When you're hurting it helps a little to find someone who is hurting. It helps to have a friend who really knows how you feel.

The simple fact that these blind men followed Jesus reveals their desire for his help. I wonder, did the Lord slow down just enough to where they could keep up?

These men call Jesus, "Son of David". This is the first time the bible records Jesus being called by this title. This was another way of calling him the Messiah. Matthew recorded Jesus' genealogy and calls him the "Son of David" (Mat.1:1).

One requirement for the one who would be the Messiah was that he be the offspring of David (2 Sam.7:13). Of course, Jesus met that requirement.

Their one request was for mercy. They knew enough to know they did not deserve what they were asking for. Mercy is for those who are needy, mercy is for those who can't help themselves, but mercy is for those who don't deserve it.

Do you realize your need for God's mercy? If you feel you deserve God's blessings, I feel sorry for you. The blessings of God are for those who realize they do not deserve them.

Our God is a God of mercy and comfort (2 Co 1:3; Eph 2:4).

I can't imagine how these men must have felt. How awful it would be to be blind. What excitement must have filled their hearts when they heard that Jesus was passing their way.

*Mt 9:28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.*

Jesus goes into a house but that does not stop these blind men. They follow him in. They don't give up.

Jesus asks a searching question, "*Believe ye that I am able to do this*". Do you believe I can? Their response was "Yea Lord".

If he asked you that question, what would be your answer? Do we believe he can? I am sure we believe he *could*. We certainly believe that God *did* great things, but I'm not so sure we believe he *will* do great things. Our God has not changed. He's looking for someone who will not just believe he can, but will believe that he will.

*Mt 9:29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.*

They received according to their faith. And so do we. We receive from the Lord according to our faith. Perhaps that is why we receive so little. Little faith brings little results. Great faith brings great things. We have a great God, but we have little faith. So, we receive little things even though we have a great God.

- Our lack of faith dishonors God

Lack of faith is us telling God we cannot believe him.

- Our lack of faith displeases God

God wants us to believe him. When we refuse to trust him, he is displeased. That isn't too much to ask. Trust is a vital part of any relationship. We can't please God without faith (Mk.4:40; 1 Cor.10:5; Heb.11:6).

- Our lack of faith hinders God

Since our faith moves God, our lack of faith hinders him (Ps.78:41; Mat.13:58). As Jesus said in these verses, as our faith is, so we receive from God.

- Our lack of faith hurts us

It robs us of the peace that comes when we are trusting the Lord (Jn.20:29).

There is no greater peace than that which comes to the person who completely trusts the Lord. We worry needlessly.

- Our lack of faith hurts others

Someone is watching us. There's a generation coming after us. They need to know they can trust God. They need to see faith in our lives. They need to see a people who believe their God is trustworthy.

The condition of this world will only worsen. Those coming after us will need faith more than any other generation since the beginning of time. We need to instill in them a faith that will not waver. We won't be able to do that unless we have that type of faith ourselves.

*Mt 9:30 And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.*

Jesus did what they asked. He did what they needed. Nothing is impossible to him.

He told them to not tell anyone what he had done. The words, "*straitly charged*" have a sternness connected to them. Jesus did not want to be known merely as a miracle worker. The more his fame spread, the more difficult it would be to move about and do his father's will.

*Mt 9:31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.*

I believe this would be one of the most difficult commandments to obey. To not tell anyone what the Lord had done, how difficult would that be? How could you keep quiet about such a wonderful miracle?

Some thoughts about these blind men.

- They realized they had a need

How ridiculous would it have been for these blind men to act like they had no problem? Unfortunately, there are many today who refuse to admit they have a need.

- They were helpless

These men asked for mercy because they knew they could not help themselves.

May the Lord show us how helpless we are. He is our only hope.

- They believed

They had faith that Jesus would meet their need and grant their request.

- They didn't give up

Jesus tested their faith by ignoring them, by continuing down the road, and by going into a house. How often do we just give up when the Lord doesn't answer the first time we call?

The fact that he did not respond to them the first time they called did not stop them. We should keep asking until he answers, or until he tells us to quit asking.

- Their faith was rewarded

They received what they needed. If we asked them if it was worth it, what do you think they would say?

- Their faith was increased

Surely this experience caused the faith of these men to grow. Seeing the power of God at work in them helped them to trust him even more. What need could they have that was too big for a God who could give them sight?

**JESUS HEALS A DUMB MAN WHO WAS POSSESSED WITH A DEMON 9:32-34**

*Mt 9:32 As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.*

As these two men were leaving, another man is brought to Jesus. This man was unable to speak because he was possessed by a demon. Once again we find someone who is suffering a physical affliction because of demon possession.

We are reminded once more how Jesus does not just have power of sickness, he also has power over Satan.

*Mt 9:33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.*

*We are not told the details about this man's healing. All we're told is "when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake". We do know Jesus dealt with the source of the problem, not the symptom.*

The crowds marvelled because they had never seen anything like this before. The Jews has a heritage of miracles. God had worked through Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and others.

But, none of them were able to do what Jesus did. Within the course of one afternoon, Jesus had healed the woman with the issue of blood, raised Jairus' daughter, given sight to two blind men, and cast out a demon.

*Mt 9:34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.*

The multitudes marvelled when they heard this man speak, but the Pharisees tried to discredit Jesus.

The Pharisees could not deny the miracle, so they denied the source of the miracle. The Pharisee's hatred for Jesus surfaces here. Why did they despise him so? There is more involved here than men hating Jesus. The kingdom of darkness is opposing the kingdom of light.

How could they come to such a conclusion? The answer is simple, since they could not deny the miracle, they had to explain it. There were only two options that would explain it. It was either God, or the devil. They certainly would not admit it to be God, so they turned to only alternative available.

The attitude of these two groups is amazing. They both see the same miracle but they see it from two totally different viewpoints. Things have not changed. The so-called experts of science tell us we evolved from monkeys because the only other alternative is one they cannot accept, that is, God made all things, including mankind.

*Mt 9:35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

Jesus didn't fire back at the Pharisees for their attack. Instead, he simply continues to preach the truth and do what is right. Our best defense against error is truth. It will do us well to realize, we never win an argument.

What good would it have done Jesus to try to argue with these Pharisees? Instead, he continues to do what he can to reach those who will listen.

Jesus broadens his ministry and goes to the neighboring cities and villages. He went where the people were. We would do well to follow His example. I'm afraid we sit in our churches waiting for the lost to come to us. We are to go to them with the truth (Mt.28:19).

Jesus continued to preach the message of the kingdom. At this time, He was still offering the kingdom to the Jews. His message was for them to make sure they were ready for the coming of the king. God had promised the Jews a king and a kingdom (Isa.2:2-4; 9:6-7; 11:1-9; 32:1; Ezk.34:24; 37:24; Jer.30:9; Amos 9:11; Mic.4:1-13; Zech.2:10-12).

The one requirement connected to this kingdom was repentance. Jesus came preaching "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt.4:17). As we know, the Jews did not repent. As a whole, they rejected their Messiah and his kingdom.

*Mt 9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

Once again we see the compassion of the Lord. He saw the multitudes. There are billions of people on earth; I wonder how many of them we really see.

The multitudes "fainted". The word "fainted" means to be weary or heavily burdened. There were multitudes of people searching for peace, but finding none. They had laid upon themselves the burden of keeping the law, and it wasn't working. Like anyone today who tries to do good enough to please God and go to heaven, they found themselves in bondage. There is no greater burden than the burden of trying to please God by our own merit.

Jesus was moved because he saw the people as sheep without a shepherd. There is nothing more sad than sheep that have no shepherd. Sheep are helpless without their shepherd. They depend totally on the shepherd for food, protection, and guidance.

The multitudes needed someone to guide them. Jesus was the one who could have led them into peace, but they would not accept him. So, they wandered on in their blindness.

Like sheep without a shepherd are hopeless, so is man without God.

*Mt 9:37-38 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

Jesus saw the multitudes as a field that was ready to be harvested.

When I think of Jesus' words in these verses, I think of the following words....

- ALERT

We should be alert. It's easy to overlook the multitudes around us who are heading to hell.

In John 4:35, Jesus said "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest".

We should be alert at all times. The next person we pass may be the one we need to witness to. If someone doesn't tell them, they will go to hell.

- ABUNDANCE

Jesus said the "harvest truly is plenteous".

When you think of a field of wheat, you don't think of one or two stalks, you think of thousands. So it is in the world around us. There are multitudes in need of a Savior.

At this time there are 7.3 billion people on earth. The vast majority do not know the Lord. The harvest truly is plenteous.

Your field is your family, friends, neighbors, those you pass in the stores, parks, or gyms, those you meet in elevators, funerals, and even at church.

- AVAILABLE

The idea is the field is ready right now for harvest. Certainly, there are many who do not want to hear the gospel. But, there are many who do want to hear. They are ready. They are longing for someone to tell them how they can find forgiveness. Who knows, the next one you witness to, may be one of the ones who is ready. So, tell them, tell them all.

- ANTICIPATION

A farmer plants his field in anticipation of a harvest. He labors hard and long, but he knows it will be worth it in the end. We should sow the seed of the gospel in faith. We should anticipate the harvest.

Don't give up if they refuse to listen the first time. Keep sowing, keep expecting. God can touch their heart. Very few get saved the first time they hear the gospel.

- ACCOUNTABILITY

We are accountable for the ones we are supposed to witness to. The Lord said they blood would be on our hands if we do not warn them (Ezk.3:17-21).

- ASK

Jesus didn't just say the harvest was plenteous, he also said the laborers are few. This was true in his day and it certainly is true in our day. How many Christians do you know who witness regularly? Do you?

Jesus tells us to pray that the Lord of the harvest will send more laborers into his harvest (v.38). This is an amazing statement. Jesus is telling us to ask him to send laborers into the harvest. He wants us to ask him. He wants to send laborers, but he waits for us to ask.

- AWARDS

To those who are faithful to witness, he will give rewards.

Paul was excited about going to heaven because he knew he would see people he had led to the Lord there.

1 Th 2:19–20 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.

THE KING'S MISSION ..... SENDS OUT THE TWELVE 10:1-42

*Mt 10:1 And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.*

Luke describes this event in more detail than Matthew (Lk. 6:12-16). Jesus spent the entire night in prayer. The next day, He calls all his disciples to Him and chooses twelve. He will name these twelve apostles.

The word "disciple" means student. Jesus calls them to do as he has done. They are to learn from him and do what he does.

There being twelve apostles probably has a relation with there being twelve tribes of Israel.

Notice, he calls them "unto him" and then he sends them out for him. If we expect to go out for him, we must first come to him. Unless they came to him, they would lack the power needed to do his will. So it is with us.

He sends them to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the nation of Israel (v.6). God has always used people to reach people. He gave them power to cast out demons, and to heal all manner of disease. This power was to be the proof that they came from God, and was doing his work.

The first thing that catches my attention when reading through the list of disciples is the fact of how different these men are. They are from different backgrounds, different occupations, and different life experiences, yet he uses them.

This should remind us of how God can use all types of people. You may not be from the who's who of society but the God of heaven can use you. You may not feel that you are as talented as others but God has a place for you in his work.

It isn't our talent, our background, or our intellect that God is looking for. He is looking for someone who is available. He gives the power needed to the one who says, "here am I".

*Mt 10:2-4 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.*

This is the first time the names of the twelve are given. The apostles are listed in three places in the gospels (Mt.10:2-4; Mk.3:16-19; Lu.6:14-16). They not always listed in the same order but that makes no difference. Peter is always listed first, and Judas Iscariot is always listed last.

These twelve disciples were also called apostles. The word "disciple" means student, but the word "apostle" means a "delegate" or "sent out one". Jesus is sending them in his name to act as his representatives.



They have been learning from him, now they are about to do what they have been taught.

They were much like the ambassadors our country sends out to represent America. They went in the name of the one who sent them. They spoke with the authority of the one who sent them. They were to say only what the one who sent them told them to say.

There were some specific qualifications for a true apostle. Peter explains these qualifications after Judas hung himself (Acts 1:15-26).

- An apostle had have a special calling from the Lord (Acts 1:17; Acts 9:15; Rom.1:5; Gal.1:1; Eph.4:11)
- An apostle had to be associated with the ministry of Christ (Acts 1:21-22)
- An apostle must have seen the Lord after his resurrection (Acts 1:22; Acts 22:14; 1 Cor.9:1)
- An apostle had to have a God given power to do the miraculous (Mk.3:15; Acts 2:43; Acts 4:33; Acts 5:12,15)

Other men were called apostles who were not of the twelve. Barnabas (Acts 14:4), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25), Andronicus and Junia (Ro.16:7), James the Lord's brother (Gal.1:19), and Paul was an apostle "out of due time" (1 Cor.15:8-10).

The apostles were the ones God chose to establish His church (Eph.4:11). They laid the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20).

The office of apostleship ended when these men died. There is no evidence that shows these apostles were replaced when they died.

The apostles were called for a reason, and for a certain period of time. Once that purpose had been accomplished there was no reason for any more apostles.

*Mt 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:*

They were not to go to the Gentiles, or the Samaritans. The Gentiles were any people who were not Jews. The Samaritans were a mixed race. They were hated by Jew and Gentile.

The kingdom message for was the Jews. Jesus did not forbid his disciples from preaching to individual Gentiles or Samaritans if they encountered them along their way, but the message was primarily for Israel.

*Mt 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

Jesus sent them to the people of Israel. He saw the people of Israel as sheep that were lost. Israel was God's chosen people but they had wandered from his will. Jesus is sending these men in an attempt to draw Israel back to God.

I have to be honest. I think God is being better to the Jews than they deserve. He had done so much for them. He brought them out of Egyptian bondage. He provided for them in the wilderness even though they complained most of the time. He gave them the tabernacle and the temple to worship in. He sent them godly leaders to direct them. He was merciful to them during the years when they had ungodly leaders. He protected them from ungodly nations who wanted to destroy them.

But, even though God treated them in such a manner, they rejected Him, they disobeyed Him, and they worshipped false gods. And yet again, we find the Lord reaching out to Israel. Once again, we see Him being merciful.

But then, I think of me. I remember how God has been as merciful to me as He has to Israel. I, like Israel have devoured the good things of God, and lived selfishly. I also, have abused the grace and mercy of God more times than I can count.

And so, I say, thank the Lord for His mercy on undeserving people.

The apostles were sent to the lost sheep of Israel. Today our commission is to go to the world and tell everyone the gospel message (Acts 1:8).

Mark tells us Jesus sent them out two by two (Mk.6:7). This strategy still works today.

Going two by two...

- They could reach more people than if the entire group stayed together
- Having a companion helped them to serve

It has always been difficult to go out in the name of the Lord. Having a fellow Christian makes it a little easier.

- Each of them would have a witness in case of trouble

The devil will attempt to ruin the testimony of God's people. He doesn't mind lying if it will accomplish his desire. Many Christian's testimony has been ruined when accused of some inappropriate action they were not guilty of. Having another Christian with us will provide a witness to our actions.

*Mt 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

They were to preach as they went. They were to preach that the kingdom of heaven was as hand. This was the same message Jesus had preached (Mt.4:17).

Jesus had come to offer the kingdom to Israel. Their king was present, if they would simply believe it and accept him.

*Mt 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.*

The apostles were given the ability to heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out demons. Surely the kingdom of heaven was stronger than the kingdom of Satan.

As miraculous as it was, the apostles did raise the dead on at least two occasions (Acts 9:40-42 and Acts 20:8-12).

They had received freely, so they were to give freely. Their service and their power were to be used at no charge.

How different from so many of the preachers of today who expect and demand large sums of money.

*Mt 10:9-10 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.*

Anyone taking a trip would take the provisions necessary for their journey. But, Jesus told the apostles to take nothing extra. They weren't even to take any money to pay for food, or a place to lodge.

A scrip was a bag used by shepherds to carry their lunch. It could be used to carry food or supplies.

It's strange that so many claim verse 8 but ignore verses 9 and 10. There are a lot of people who claim to have supernatural power with God, but they want nothing to do with the part about having nothing.

The reason Jesus gives for taking nothing extra is interesting. He says, "the workman is worthy of his meat". Those who receive from the apostles should be willing to provide their necessities.

God has always used His people to provide the need of the ministry. We can see this principle when the tabernacle was built (Ex.25:1-9).

We find this principle in the New Testament also. Paul says, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Cor.9:14). He means those who preach should be compensated for preaching by those who hear them.

Paul refers to an Old Testament scripture to teach this principle (1 Tim.5:17). He said the ox should not be muzzled. When an ox was used to grind grain, they allowed it to eat some of the grain as he worked.

Paul said it would be inhumane to muzzle the ox to where he couldn't eat a little while he worked. So, as the labor of the ox was that which supplied his necessary food, the labor of the servants of Christ should provide their needs.

God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor.9:7). He will reward those who trust Him and give as He leads.

Since God was sending the apostles, He would use His people to provide what they needed. They were not to depend on any of their own resources. They went out depending on God. He was sending them, and He would provide for them. If need be, He would perform a miracle in order that His servants be provided for.

*Mt 10:11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.*

There were very few hotels in Jesus' day. The custom of the day was that homeowners provide a place of lodging and food to those traveling.

The apostles were instructed to accept this hospitality from those who were godly, but to decline it from those who were ungodly.

*Mt 10:12 And when ye come into an house, salute it.*

It was customary to greet people as you entered their house. The common greeting was “peace be to you”.  
*Mt 10:13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.*

The apostles were to go in peace to all. Some would receive them, but some would reject them. How they were received would determine their reaction.

The usual way to greet people was to say, “peace be to you”. It was, in effect, asking God to bless the people of the home. If those in the house extended a godly response, it was evidence they were godly, and deserving of God’s blessings.

On the other hand, if the people in the house did not respond in a godly manner, it proved they were not godly. In such cases, the apostles were to withdraw themselves, and their peace. God will not give his peace to those who refuse his message.

I would love to see such a spirit upon the people of God today. Just them being there, made a difference. Is this not the way it should be? Should not our presence make a difference wherever we go?

*Mt 10:14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.*

The fate of the people depended upon themselves. If they received the apostles and their message, they received peace.

If however, they refused the men and the message, the peace they could have enjoyed would be withdrawn. This is true today. We forfeit His peace when we walk our way. I am convinced, it is not worth it.

The apostles were to literally shake the dust off their feet. This was a common custom which was a symbol of contempt. It was a visible sign that they regarded the place, and people cursed by God.

God is a merciful God, but His mercy does run out on those who reject Him. The Psalmist said “*his mercy endureth for ever*”, but it doesn’t endure forever for those who reject Him.

*Mt 10:15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city.*

What a terrifying verse. Jesus speaks of the severity of judgment. The severity of God’s judgment is determined, at least in part, by the amount of light given. Rejecting the light of God’s word is serious.

We know how Sodom and Gomorrhah was judged by God (Gen.19:1-29). He judged them quickly and severely.

But, the judgment Jesus is referring to in this verse is when those who lived in Sodom and Gomorrhah stand before God. No doubt, those who lived in those cities will be judged severely when they stand before the Lord.

And yet, Jesus said the judgment of the cities that reject the apostles will be more severe than that on Sodom and Gomorrhah. The obvious reason, these cities had rejected the great light of the apostles. Some of them had seen, and heard the very Son of God himself, and they had rejected him.

I have said often, the worse place to go to hell from, is the pew of a church that preaches the gospel. Those who hear the word and reject it will not go unpunished.

*Mt 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

Jesus warns the apostles that they are being sent into unfriendly territory. This warning certainly applies to us today. Our task is to go into a world that doesn’t want us, with a message they don’t want to hear, and do it in a way that will cause them to accept it.

The world and the devil are not our friends. We are in the middle of a battlefield. Jesus described it like sheep going into the middle of a pack of wolves.

Jesus gives them instructions about how to handle the situation they are in. He told them to be “*wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*”.

But, what does that mean?

To begin with, we need to understand, Jesus is not teaching his disciples how they can get ahead in life. He isn’t trying to teach them to be good business men and outdo their competitors.

Jesus' primary thought was how his disciples could reach lost Israel with the word of God. We need to adapt the same principles today as we try to reach our world with the gospel.

Jesus said his disciples must "*be wise as serpents*". The word "wise" means to be clever or perceptive.

Serpents in Jesus' day were considered the perfect example of wisdom and perception. The snake is one of the most perceptive of God's creatures. It is very much aware of its environment. Most snakes are not aggressive and will do everything they can to avoid conflict with their predators.

So, the wisdom of the serpent speaks of its ability to avoid its enemies, and to catch its prey.

Is that not what we need to win our world? We need God's wisdom in order to avoid those who would harm us, and, at the same time, reach those who need to Lord.

Like the serpent, we need to be perceptive to those we speak to. If we confront the lost with a harsh and cruel attitude, it is unlikely we will reach them. If we have a holier-than-thou attitude we will turn people away from the gospel.

Wise as serpents means we should use spiritual discernment when dealing with the lost. Since every person we encounter is different, we need wisdom. What works with one person will not work with another.

Our message doesn't change, but our methods will. The only message we have is the gospel of Jesus Christ. How we get that message across takes God given wisdom.

Jesus also said his apostles must "*harmless as doves*".

The word "*harmless*" speaks of purity and being innocent.

Doves in Jesus' day were considered to be a perfect example of meekness and innocence.

I believe that is what Jesus was saying. He knew his disciples would need both.

- They would need meekness

They were going to be mistreated in horrible ways, but they could not fight back. The moment a Christian fights back, they have lost the opportunity to win the lost.

Stephen didn't fight back even while he was being stoned (Acts 7:60). Jesus didn't fight back. He forgave his attackers (Lk. 23:34).

Harmless as doves means to be not fight back. Even though we may be mistreated, the godly Christian does not retaliate. We will never win them if we react in an ungodly manner. It's more important to be a good witness than to defend ourselves.

- They would need innocence

How vitally important it was for his disciples (and us) to be pure and above reproach. Our lives must be beyond reproach if we are to win the lost. The world around us is evil and corrupt. We dare not live as they do.

Jesus could say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin". His life was pure enough to where no one could rightly accuse him of doing wrong. Pilate said, "I find no fault in him at all". The world hated Jesus, but they were not able to bring one true accusation against him.

If we are to reach the lost world, we need to be wise like the serpent, but we also need to be pure and godly like the dove.

#### JESUS TELLS HIS DISCIPLES WHAT THEY CAN EXPECT

*Mt 10:17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;*

Jesus tells his disciples to expect trouble. The word "*beware*" means to pay attention, or to be cautious. They were not to do anything that would put them in unnecessary danger.

He meant what he said when he said they would be like sheep among wolves. Not everyone will love them, or their message.

Jesus wanted them to realize their godly lives would not keep them from being persecuted. In fact, a godly life can be the reason for persecution. Ungodly people don't like godly people.

The "*councils*" Jesus speaks about is the judicial system that was set up in most cities. These councils would settle disagreements between parties.

They would be "scourged". Scourging (whipping) was a part of the Old Testament method of punishment.

This whipping was to be done in the presence of the judge and was limited to forty stripes (Dt. 25:2-3).

A note of interest. The Jews wanted to make sure they did not break the law when they scourged. To make sure they did not exceed forty stripes, they would apply only 39 stripes, just in case they had miscounted. Paul talks about receiving forty stripes, save one (2 Cor.11:24).

Notice this scourging will be done in the synagogues. The synagogue was supposed to be a place of worship. In many ways they were like our churches of today. In each of the synagogues they had an area where they would carry out scourging on those who had broken God's law.

Paul talks about beating Christians in the synagogues (Acts 22:19; 26:11).

These wonderful places of worship had been turned into places of sin. A place built that eyes might be opened to truth had become places of spiritual blindness.

A building built for love had become a place of hatred. The sacred sermon had been replaced with the crack of a whip.

Jesus is warning the apostles about the men who will attack them. The worse thing about this, those who will abuse the apostles will think they are doing God's will by doing so.

*Mt 10:18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.*

The apostles would eventually be brought before the civil authorities like common criminals. The governors and kings were the Gentile authorities of that day. This means, the Jews would bring some of the apostles before the world's judicial system.

Who would have ever expected this? These unknown and unimportant men would cause such a stir as to cause the civil authorities to become involved.

It's amazing how much the devil hates the Lord and his people. He hates the disciple's message so much that he gets governors and kings involved in his attempt to keep them quiet.

Jesus said this mistreatment would be "for my sake". The apostles weren't hated because of some wrong they had done. They were hated because they stood for the Lord. They weren't persecuted because the world hated them; they were persecuted because the world hated the one they spoke of.

The same is true today. I certainly hope our persecution isn't because of our attitude, or the way we act. If it is, we get what we deserve. So many Christians have sour attitudes and live in a way that dishonors God. If they are mistreated, it's because of how they act and certainly isn't because of a godly lifestyle.

The kind of persecution Jesus spoke of came because the disciples lived godly lives and spoke the truth. This is what Jesus spoke about in Matthew 5:11, where he said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake". Just as they lied about Jesus (Mt.26:60), what was being said about his disciples was false.

The devil and the world has always hated God's message. They did in Jesus' day and still do. We should not be surprised if we are persecuted for our walk with the Lord.

Jesus said these actions would be "a testimony against them and the Gentiles". He is saying the Jews ("them") and the Gentiles will be held accountable for their actions against these men of God.

The mention of Gentiles shows God's plan after the resurrection of Christ and how the gospel will be opened to Gentiles. God was not surprised when the Jews rejected His son (Jn.1:11).

*Mt 10:19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.*

What seems to be a horrible experience will be a great opportunity for them to testify about the goodness of God. It is amazing how God can take what seems to be bad, and make something good out of it. The trials we face may be difficult, but God has a purpose with each of them. Let God turn them into a blessing!

Paul learned this. He would testify of his imprisonment and say, "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; (Phil.1:12). God had taken what seemed to be a hindrance, and made it a blessing.

Jesus tells his men to not be afraid when they are brought up to be interrogated. How can he say this? He can say it because they will not be there alone. The God of heaven will be with them. He will give them what they should say.

They are to not even give it a thought until it happens. At the proper time, God will fill their minds with the words that should be spoken.

I personally believe the concern the disciples had was not about saying something that would get them in more trouble with the officials. I believe their concern was that they not say anything that would dishonor their Lord, or anything that would not be biblical.

They realized they were spokesmen for the Lord's message. They understood the importance of their task. They realized the opportunity to speak to the civil officers of their day wasn't something that happened often, and it was nothing to take lightly. The Lord had opened a door and they wanted to do what they could to take full advantage of it.

Some have tried to use this verse to say a preacher should not prepare for the messages he preaches. Nothing could be further from the truth. Certainly the Holy Spirit will speak through the preacher as he delivers his message, but he should seek the Lord and study to prepare for the message he is to preach.

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

Every preacher should apply his heart to study and be prepared to preach (Pro.23:12).

Jesus' prediction was fulfilled on more than one occasion (Acts 5:26-28; 12:1-4; 23:33-35; 26:1)

*Mt 10:20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.*

How could these simple men be prepared to speak to governors and kings? What could they possibly say in such a predicament?

The fact is, they would not have to say anything, the Lord would speak through them. The Holy Spirit would give them the words they needed to say. After all, who else would know what needed to be said?

This would not be the first time the Holy Spirit spoke through people. God told Moses He would be with him and "will be thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Ex. 4:12).

We can rely on Him to do the same for us. We also, can be His spokesmen. But, we must be sensitive to the voice of the Spirit within us.

Will you please notice with me what we don't find in these verses? We don't find a way for them to escape their dilemma. The Holy Spirit isn't going to give them a way to talk themselves out of their problem. There are times when the Lord does not want to deliver us out of the problem, but He will always help us through the problem. In such cases, it is vitally important that we listen to Him.

Jesus wanted the apostles to be prepared for the trouble ahead. What they would endure would be difficult but it would be a lot worse had they not known it was coming. He tells them what to do when it happens. They can truly face what was coming without fear or anxiety.

*Mt 10:21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.*

The apostles certainly endured horrible persecution. Most of them died a martyr's death. However, verses 21 to 23 seem to go beyond the experience of the apostles and speak of the events during the Tribulation Period. After all, Jesus is speaking to Jewish disciples. The Jewish believers that live during the Tribulation Period will face persecution like no one else.

The message of Christ has always caused division. The division may be in one's own family. Many Christians suffer because of a family member who wants nothing to do with their beliefs. Many wives are treated badly by their husbands, husbands are ridiculed by their wives, and even children are mistreated by their parents because they are believers.

The persecution Jesus warns about will worsen. It will come to the place to where Christians will be put to death. The time will come when this division is so severe that one brother will betray another. One family member will turn another family member into the officials of that day.

This animosity will be so great that a brother will betray his brother, a father will betray his child, and a child will betray their parents. How can this happen? How can there be such a hatred for the things of God? How can a hatred for the things of God be stronger than the love of family? I can't explain it, but it is so.

Jesus will say later, "the love of many shall wax cold". He certainly knew what he was talking about. The natural love for family will fade away in many people.

Maybe we see now why Jesus told his disciples to shake the dust of these people off their feet (v.14). They reject the truth in such a severe manner as to make them unworthy of God's mercy.

*Mt 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

This verse has been misused by many in an effort to teach a person can lose their salvation. The word "saved" here has nothing to do with salvation in the spiritual sense.

Jesus is explaining how difficult things will become for the child of God during the Tribulation Period. The Anti-Christ and all his followers will be in an all-out effort to put to death every believer on earth.

It will be so severe that the Jewish believers are told to flee to the mountains in order to escape the Anti-Christ. They are told to run to the mountains and not even take time to go home to get any supplies (Mk.13:14-18). Many will be put to death during this time (Mk. 13:24).

The word "saved" in verse 22 is talking about being saved from death, not being saved from sin.

Jesus is saying anyone who is able to avoid the Anti-Christ's attack and endure to the end of the Tribulation Period will be saved from death because the Lord will return to rescue them.

And how true this is, for Jesus himself will come to rescue his own. In the nick of time, Jesus will return and deal with the Anti-Christ and all those who have followed him (Rev.19:11-15; 19-21).

He will deliver his people from certain death.

*Mt 10:23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.*

Jesus continues his instructions to those who will be persecuted. He tells them to keep on the move. They are not to give in to the persecution. They are to avoid it the best they can. He gives them the hope that will keep them going; the Son of man will come.

God will prepare a place of refuge for the people of Israel. Israel will flee to this place during the second half of the Tribulation Period (Rev.12:6). They will dwell in this place for 1260 days. Many believe this place will be the city of Petra. This city is presently deserted and lies south of the Dead Sea.

We certainly see the tenacity of the devil in verse 23. He doesn't give up. If the believers escape in one city, he'll pursue them to the next.

We also see the spirit of these believers. They would rather die than deny their Lord. The grace of God is amazing. So many of God's people have endured horrible torture, but did not deny their Lord.

Where did this strength come from? Are we to assume they were merely strong willed people? Of course not. It is the good grace of our God who gives them strength in times when they have no strength of their own. He gives them courage to face pain and death with a song in their heart and a testimony on their lips. Stephen enjoyed this amazing grace (Acts 7:59-60). This same grace is available for us today. I wonder how many of us experience this grace on a regular basis.

*Mt 10:24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.*

The servant need not expect to be treated better than his master. If they mistreated Jesus, they certainly would his disciples.

*Mt 10:25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?*

Jesus talks about the disciple being "as his master". The word "master" is a word used for a teacher. Any student would be pleased if they became as their teacher. It would be wonderful if the student in the math class would learn everything his teacher knows. If the person learning to play the piano becomes as great a musician as their teacher, it would be a wonderful accomplishment.

Would it not be a blessing to become like our heavenly teacher?

Wouldn't it be wonderful....

- If we could love like he did

Jesus' entire life was a display of love. John 3:16 tells it all. May the Lord touch our hearts with the same love he had. He tells us to love as he did (Jn.15:12).

- If we could show mercy like he did

Jesus showed mercy everywhere he went. He helped, healed, and forgave people who certainly did not deserve it.

May that same mercy be demonstrated in our lives. If he had not had mercy on me, I believe I would be in hell right now. If he can give me mercy, certainly I should do the same for someone else.

- If we could do the Father's will like he did

Jesus came to this world because it was the Father's will. He lived every second in submission to that which would please God. He said, "*My meat is to the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work*" (Jn.4:34). How many of us can say we desire the Father's will as much as we desire our daily food?

Jesus could say, "I do always those things that please him" (Jn.8:29). I know we will never be perfect, but we come so far from being like our Lord in this regard.

If we could endure the difficulties like he did

I know Jesus was God but it still amazes me how he did not let how he was treated effect his actions.

It takes so little to stop us from doing the Lord's will. A little rain keeps a lot of Christians from going to church. If something is said that offends us, we quit serving the Lord. The slightest trial is all it takes for many Christians to give up, and quit.

May the Lord place in our hearts a desire to do His will that is so strong that nothing can keep us from doing the perfect will of God.

It is an honor to become like our Lord, even if that means we will be persecuted as he was. If we are truly walking with the Lord, it should not matter what they say about us. If they said Jesus was doing his work by the power of Beelzebub, can his servants expect any better treatment?

*Mt 10:26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.*

This speaks of how all people, saved or lost, will eventually stand before Jesus and give account of their lives. Those who are saved, at the Bema Seat (2 Cor.5:10). Those who are lost, at the Great White Throne Judgment, Rev.20: 11-15).

This verse is full of truth. It tells us the following.

- Jesus is the winner in the end

The Lord is the one who wins. He is the one who brings all things to light. It may appear that the enemy is winning for the moment, but the story isn't finished yet.

- Jesus knows all things

The only way he can know the truth in the end is to be able to see all things now. God sees all (Job 31:4; 34:21; Heb.4:13).

- The truth will be revealed

There will be nothing hidden then. All things will be revealed.

This thought can be comforting because the world lies about us so often. The persecuted saint can be encouraged by knowing the time is coming when the truth will be revealed.

This thought can also be very disturbing. It can be distressing to realize, one day all the truth about us will be revealed.

No doubt, there are things that we do not want revealed. There are some things about us that we do not even recognize ourselves at this point. To see to whole ugly truth about ourselves will be probably the worse experience we have ever had to face.

- What the world thinks about us should not matter

Jesus said the truth will be revealed in the end. The disciples were to not worry about what was said about them. The day is coming when the truth will be revealed. In that day, all will see who was right and who was wrong.

- Our motives will be revealed

The Lord is concerned with what we do. He is also with *why* we do what we do. Our motives do matter. A Sunday School teacher may teach a wonderful lesson. All we know is what he teaches, we cannot see why he teaches. If he teaches in order to get attention and to be recognized, this will be revealed, and he will lose a reward he could have received.



- All are accountable

No one escapes the Lord. All will stand before him sooner or later.

Those who are saved will stand before him at the Bema Seat. They will receive or loose rewards according to how they lived their Christian life on earth (1 Cor.3:11-15; 2 Cor.5:10).

Those who are lost will stand before him at the Great White Throne Judgment. They will be cast into the Lake Of Fire (Rev.20:11-15).

*Mt 10:27 What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.*

The apostle's message was to come from the Lord himself. They were not to preach their personal beliefs, opinions, or experiences. They may have been wrong. Our opinion does not matter. Only what the Lord says that can always be trusted.

They were to hold nothing back. They were to repeat exactly what they heard. What the Lord said to his disciples was needed by those who heard them speak.

We desperately need to hear from God. What hope do we have if God is not speaking?

What he said to them "*in darkness*" (in private) they were to "*speak in light*" (to everyone).

There is no greater privilege than to be a spokesman for the Lord. This certainly is true of preachers but it's also true of the Christian who witnesses for the Lord.

They were to speak the message from the housetops. I think this can have two meanings.

First, Jesus has in mind that his disciples share his messages to individuals. Since the roofs were flat they provided a place where the home owner could sit and relax. In such a hot climate this was a place they used often. Family and friends would meet together on their rooftops.

This provided an excellent place for the disciples to meet with individuals and share the Word of God one on one.

Secondly, Jesus has in mind that his disciples literally shout his message from the rooftops. A rooftop provided an excellent place to preach the word of God to whoever was within hearing distance. This method of delivering the word was much like the street preaching of our day. They preached to whoever would listen.

Either way, they were not to keep the message to themselves. The same is true of us today. We have a message that will save any sinner. How can we keep quiet? If you had a cure for cancer certainly you could not keep it to yourself.

We have a message more valuable than a cure for cancer. And yet, we let lost people pass us every day and refuse to give them the message that would deliver them. How can we do such a thing? How can our hearts be so hard?

*Mt 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell...*

This is the second of three times in this chapter that Jesus tells his disciples to not fear (vv.26,28,31). Even though Jesus knew his disciples would suffer he tells them to not fear. Their enemies may take their physical life (body), but they could not take their spiritual life (soul).

When we fear God, we do not have to fear any man.

The child of God need not fear any man because their heavenly Father watches over them at all times. Paul reminds us of this fact when he wrote, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Ro 8:31).

Even though Jesus tells them (and us) to not fear, he goes on to say we should fear the one who has the power to send someone to hell. He is not suggesting that a true disciple can lose their salvation and go to hell as a result. He is merely pointing out the fact of how physical (temporary) things are not as important as spiritual (eternal) things.

The people who will persecute the apostles may be able to take their lives but they can no touch their souls. They cannot do any permanent damage.

We know the earthly bodies of the unbelievers will be raised in order to be punished forever (Rev.20:13-14). But, Jesus' words in verse 28 indicate those who go to hell with have some type of body. The rich man felt the pain of hell (Lk.16:23-24). He was able to speak; he had eyes and a tongue (v.23).

The torment of hell will be physical and spiritual. The pain of fire for the body and the pain of the emotions for the soul. Perhaps the worse torment will be the torment in the mind of the forever condemned person.

The word “destroy” does not mean annihilation. It is the same greek word translated “perish” in John 3:16. The soul will last forever, either on the streets of heaven, or in the pits of hell.

The word “hell” in this verse is the greek word Gehenna. This speaks of the lake of fire (Mt.9:47; Rev.20:10).

A note of interest:

Some have actually said “him” in verse 28 is speaking of the devil. Nothing could be further from the truth. Only God has the power over life and death, heaven and hell.

*Mt 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.*

Jesus continues his advice to his disciples about going out to deliver his message. He reminds them of how important they are to him. He uses an example of sparrows to make his point. A sparrow was one of the smallest, and least valuable, of all birds.

In Jesus’ day sparrows were sold at the market two for a farthing. A farthing was one tenth of the Roman penny.

Jesus said in Luke 12:6 that five sparrows were sold for two farthings. These birds were so small, if the buyer bought four, they were given the fifth at the same price.

To say the least, the sparrow was a bird that everyone thought was unimportant and insignificant. Yet, God is very much involved in the life of every sparrow. There are millions of sparrows that live where no man will ever see them. But, our God knows every one of them.

The words “without your Father” mean much more than just that He knows when a sparrow dies. It actually means He controls its fall. God has to give His permission for it to die.

These words remind us of how God controls even the smallest matters of this earth. If He is in control of these matters, how is it that we worry? If He cares for the sparrows, certainly He can be trusted to take care of His children. The care of our heavenly Father is so great, we ought never fear.

*Mt 10:30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

How many hairs do you have on your head? To tell the truth, other than the fact that mine are getting fewer by the day, I couldn’t care less. But God does. This is a simple way to say, there isn’t anything He doesn’t know about us.

*Mt 10:31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

This is the third time Jesus tells his disciple to fear not in this chapter (vv.26,28,31).

It’s important to remember, Jesus said these things while talking about his disciples going out to tell his message. They could expect to be persecuted. But, even if you may be going through the worse experience of your life, you can remember, He knows what you are going through. Like the sparrows, He will not allow anything to happen to you that isn’t His will. And, like the sparrows, He is very much aware of your situation. You are not alone.

*Mt 10:32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

The word “confess” in this verse is the same word translated “profess” in 1 Timothy 6:12. There, Paul says, “hast professed a good profession before many witnesses”. This word is translated “confession” in Romans 10:10, where it is referring to a person who acknowledges the fact that they have been saved.

This helps us to understand what Jesus is talking about here. To “confess” him is to acknowledge publicly our dependence on him for our salvation. Peter made this type of confession (Mt.16:16), so did the eunuch (Acts 8:37). My question to you dear friend, have you? Are you certain about your salvation? Do you remember the time when you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?

Those who confess him in this life will be confessed by him in heaven (Mt.25:21). Jesus will claim the believers. He will say, “this one is one of mine”.

Jesus made it very clear; our eternal destiny depends on how we respond to him.

*Mt 10:33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

Many claim to be going to heaven, but only those who have been saved by the blood of Christ are really going. Those who do not call on him now, will be denied by him when they stand before him.

They will hear the saddest words ever spoken, “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mt 7:23).

*Mt 10:34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

Even though Jesus’ message was a message of peace it caused division.

He truly was the Prince of peace (Isa.9:6), but the effects of his coming caused much turmoil. There can’t be total peace when there is disagreement about the most important thing on earth, how to get to heaven.

A sword speaks of disagreement and discord.

No doubt, this statement caused confusion for the disciples. They were expecting a Messiah to come. They expected him to deliver them from Roman oppression, and set up the kingdom that had been promised in the Old Testament (2 Sam.7:12-16; 2 Chr.6:15; Isa.2:2-4; Isa.9:7; Isa.11:6-9; Isa.65:20-25; Ps.89:3-4).

We can be assured; God has not forgotten His promise to Israel. Jesus will return at the end of the Tribulation Period and set up this kingdom, just as he promised (Mt.19:28; Mt.25:31; Rev.20:1-5).

*Mt 10:35-36 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.*

There are times when this division is within a family. Those who are not believers are opposed to those who believe. It is the unbelievers that cause this division, not the believer. The sinful heart of the unbeliever refuses to accept even the tender love that comes from the Christian.

*Mt 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

This statement is simple. We should love Jesus more than anyone, including those of our own family.

How do we determine how much we love someone? We want to please the one we love, we put the one we love before ourselves, and the one we love comes first. If our families (or anyone) have more control over us than Jesus, we do not love him more.

Jesus certainly isn’t saying it is alright to mistreat our family. Family is vitally important. Neglecting or abusing our families is unspiritual and displeasing to God (Dt.27:16; Lev.19:3; Pro.15:5; Pro.25:22).

*Mt 10:38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

In that day when a criminal was found guilty of a crime that was worthy of death, the method of execution would often be crucifixion. Part of the sentence was the criminal was compelled to carry their cross to the place of execution. Jesus carried his cross until he fell under the load (Mt.27:32).

Bearing a cross became a phrase that implied pain, suffering, disgrace, and death.

A cross certainly implies pain, suffering, and disgrace, but its primary function was to kill. I’m convinced that is what Jesus has in mind when he talked about his disciples taking up his cross.

Following Jesus will be a path that involves hardship, it is a path that involves difficulty, but it is a path that involves death. We must die out to self. We cannot do our will and the Father’s will at the same time. Paul talked about dying daily (1 Cor.15:31). We need to die out to our flesh every day.

The path that led Jesus was the path of obedience to his Father’s will. The same is true for us. Bearing our cross means we walk the path God has designated for us.

Jesus is making it crystal clear; those who follow him will suffer. However, his path is still the best path. The rewards are worth the pain. Here and now, we will enjoy the reward of knowing we are pleasing our Lord. Later, we will enjoy the rewards of heaven.

Refusing to take Jesus’ cross can be summarized simply; a person does what they want to do instead of what God wants them to do.

*Mt 10:39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*

Those who seek to live their lives for themselves will lose real life in the process. Many people think they are living by indulging in the things of this world. Little do they know that in the process of seeking to find something to make them happy, they are missing the one thing that can give them real happiness.

On the other hand, when a person gives up their life for the Lord and his will, they will discover what true living is all about. I can honestly say, I had no idea what life was until I met the Lord. I tried many things, but none of them satisfied. But, then I met the Lord. And, by doing so, I found real life.

The person who does not have Christ has no idea what real life is. Is your life empty? Is there something missing? Perhaps, the reason is because you have not yet really met Jesus. Make sure today.

*Mt 10:40 He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.*

*The word "receiveth" has the idea of the custom of homeowners receiving travelers in their homes for the night. This custom was more than just good manners. Being received by a home owner would be a great blessing to a weary traveler. They had a place to rest, eat, and sleep. The harshness of desert travel would have made it inhuman to refuse a weary traveler. The bible is filled with examples of such hospitality (Gen.18:3-5; Gen.24:28-32; Ex.2:20; Judges 13:15; 2 Kgs.4:8-11).*

A person received a disciple of Christ by believing their message and by assisting them in their ministry in some manner. Believing the message came first. No one would assist a disciple if they did not believe the message they preached.

Those who receive Jesus' disciples are receiving Jesus; those who receive Jesus are receiving the heavenly Father ("*him that sent me*"). The disciples were merely messengers of the Lord. Naturally, those who received the messenger were receiving the one the message was about.

*Mt 10:41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.*

Jesus had spoken about those who would mistreat his disciples, now he speaks about those who would assist them. He promises a reward to those who will aid his disciples.

Those who receive a prophet because he was a prophet will receive the type of reward a prophet will receive. Receiving a prophet shows the host has a great respect for the man of God. He recognizes the importance of the prophet's ministry and he wants to assist him in any way he can. This person receives the reward because they did something to aid Jesus' disciples.

By assisting the prophet the host becomes a part of the prophet's ministry. Their assistance helped enable the prophet continue to serve the Lord. They have a little bit to do with every message the prophet preached, every soul that was saved, and every person who was helped.

Those who receive a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a reward. This implies the person who receives the righteous man does so because they love righteousness. They want to be a help to anyone who lives a righteous life. The person who loves godliness shall receive the reward of the godly.

These verses remind us of the connection Christians have. We do not labor alone. Those who assist the prophet are partially responsible for the results of the prophet's ministry. Had they not assisted him, he would not have been able to accomplish as much for the Lord.

These verses also remind us of how we can do something for the glory of God. Assisting the preachers, missionaries, and other servants of the Lord is a vital part of the cause of Christ. You may not preach, but you can help those who do. You may not go to the mission field, but you can help send those who go.

*Mt 10:42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*

Jesus calls his disciples, "little ones".

A deed as insignificant as giving a disciple a cup of cold water will not be forgotten. It isn't just the size of the act; it's the motive of the heart that matters. Their love makes the difference. The simple act of giving a cup of water reveals a genuine love for the Lord and his disciples.

Jesus said he would not forget the smallest of services from his disciples.

## THE REJECTION OF THE KING BEGINS

In chapters 11-27 we see the evidence of Jesus being rejected as the Messiah. Jesus will warn the unbelievers.

He will begin to speak in parables that they might not understand his message. God won't force mankind to hear His message.

*Mt 11:1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.*

Jesus ends his instructions to his disciples. This refers to him sending the disciples out to preach the Word of God (Mt.11:5-6). Later, the disciples would meet with Jesus and tell him what had happened (Mk.6:30).

Jesus is alone now. But, he does not sit idle, he goes to teach and preach in the cities of the disciples

Notice, Jesus preached but he also taught the Word of God. There seems to be a group today who resist the idea of teaching.

No doubt, preaching is necessary and has no substitute. However, the same is true of teaching. I think we need a better understanding of both, teaching and preaching. Both are vitally needed.

*Mt 11:2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,*

John the baptist has been put in prison by Herod because he spoke against Herod's sin with his sister-in-law. Herod would eventually have John put to death (Mk.6:17-19).

While in prison John sends two of his followers to ask Jesus a question.

*Mt 11:3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?*

Some believe John sent these men because they were the ones who were doubting. Even though I understand why they believe that, I disagree. If it was their faith that was lacking, Jesus would have merely spoken directly to them and not given them a message to take back to John (v.4).

In one way John's doubt is shocking. After all, he was the one who baptized Jesus, he heard the voice of the Father from heaven, and he saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus (Mt.3:13-17). How could anyone who had that type of experience ever doubt?

On the other hand, John's doubt is totally understandable. Like all the Jews, John had expected the Messiah to come with might, overthrow Rome, and set up a kingdom.

He probably expected Jesus to have already started his attack on Rome by now. Instead of John being a part of a mighty revolution, he is in prison. Instead of fighting, Jesus is healing the sick and helping the needy. To make matter worse, Jesus has been rejected by many (Mt. 8:34).

We should remember there had been many false prophets. Could Jesus be another one? No doubt John thought through every Old Testament promise he could think of. He tried to determine if Jesus lined up with what the Word said. Yet, he could not get settled on the issue. The doubt lingered. If Jesus was the Promised One why was he in prison?

We must not think this is a lapse of John's overall faith. Jesus' response will make that clear (v.11). He still believes a Messiah will come. However, John is wondering if Jesus is the one they have been looking for. Is Jesus the Messiah, or should they look for another?

Doubt can be such a frightening thing. It's interesting to note that when the New Testament deals with doubt it is mostly speaking about believers. Seldom does the bible talk about doubt in unbelievers.

That makes sense when you think about it. I mean, you have to believe something before you can doubt it.

John's doubt should warn us. If the mighty John the baptist could doubt, certainly we can. This shows us no matter what experience we have had, we can still doubt. The devil whispers his lies in the ear of God's greatest believers.

We can be assured that John's faith was strong when he was first put in prison. After all, he could expect opposition if there was going to be a revolution. But time has gone by. He has had been in prison long enough to start wondering. Our faith is tried when trials go long. It's easy to believe when we first enter a trial, but when it runs long, it's easy to doubt.

John's response to his doubt should be a lesson to us. When he doubted he went to the right source to get the answer. He knew Jesus would tell him to truth. We defeat doubt with truth and with the facts. Only Jesus can tell us what is the real truth.

When you doubt, go to the truth and believe it. We can be sure about what the Word of God says. No matter how convincing the devil can be, he cannot undo the truth of Scripture.

We must remember how important it is to know the truth. If we are ignorant to the Word we have no defense to the lies of the devil.

#### JESUS DEFENDS JOHN THE BAPTIST vv. 4-15

*Mt 11:4-5 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.* Jesus did not rebuke John. What he did was send John evidence that would help him conquer his doubt.

I am thankful to hear Jesus' response to John. He did not attack John. Instead, he was tender.

Jesus sends John's disciples back to John with a message that is based on the Word of God. The ministry of Jesus had been exactly as Isaiah had written. Isaiah talked about the Messiah preaching good tidings unto the meek, binding up the brokenhearted, and setting captives free (Is 61:1).

The Messiah was to be a person of power but he was also to be a man who did many wonderful works for those in need. That's exactly what Jesus had been doing. Jesus would judge when the time was right but that time had not yet come.

Luke wrote about this occasion and includes something that Matthew does not mention. Jesus actually performed some miracles in the presence of John's disciples (Lk.7:19-22). In other words, he proves he is the Messiah. Jesus could have simply told John's disciples about the wonderful miracles he had been doing. But, he didn't want them to just hear about it, he wanted them to see it for themselves.

Hearing about the amazing things God has done is wonderful. But, seeing it with your own eyes is so much better. That's one of the problems of our day. So many Christians have only heard about what God has done in the past. However, there are a vast number who have not seen it for themselves.

He told John's disciples to tell John "*again*". The message was the same. Jesus didn't show John something new. The old message was that which would give him assurance. We need not look for a new message today. The old message worked for John and it will work for us.

Why did Jesus not rebuke John for his doubt? He certainly rebuked others for doubting (Mt.6:30; 8:26; 12:31; 14:31; 16:8-11; 17:20). I believe it was because of John's overall faith. He believed a Messiah was coming. He did not doubt that in the least. He simply wasn't sure if Jesus was the Messiah.

*Mt 11:6 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

The word "*offended*" means to stumble. To many, Jesus was a stumbling block (1 Pet.2:8). Jesus is saying happy is the one who believes I am the Promised One. Jesus' ministry was offensive to those who longed for political deliverance from Rome. But, it was a blessing to those who were not offended.

*Mt 11:7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?*

The multitude must have been close enough to where they heard the conversation between Jesus and John's disciples. Many of them had heard John preach and now they know he is having some doubts.

As John's disciples are leaving, Jesus speaks to the multitudes about John. He asks them a simple question, "what went ye out into the wilderness to see". They had gone to hear John. Now they are thinking, if John was doubting, maybe they shouldn't believe what he said.

Jesus describes John. He was a man who lived in the wilderness. He was a man's man. He was not like a reed that would shake at the slightest breeze (Mt.3:1).

John was bold enough to preach the truth to all. He was the one who looked the Pharisees and Sadducees in the eye and called them a bunch of snakes (Mt.3:7). John was humble enough to know his own flaws. When Jesus came to be baptized, John said, "I have need to be baptized of thee" (Mt.3:14). John was a man who hated sin. When he stood before king Herod he told him in no uncertain terms that it was a sin for him to live with his sister-in-law (Mk.6:18).

John was not the type of preacher who bowed to the opinion of man. He would never be controlled by anyone. If they were wanting a wishy-washy preacher they could have found one under every rock. There was many of that sort at the Temple. But John would never be that type of man.

We are warned to not waver. James warns us about being double minded (Jam.1:8). Paul tells us to not be carried about with every wind of doctrine (Eph.4:14).

The bible tells us that a time will come when people will not accept sound doctrine. Instead of a preacher who tells the truth as it is, they'll want someone to tickle their ears (2 Tim.4:3). We are there!

*Mt 11:8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.*

John wasn't a man who had to have the luxuries of life. He dressed in camel's hair and lived on locusts and wild honey (Mt.3:4).

John truly was an example of a person who refused the things of the world. He didn't live the way he did in an attempt to appease God. He wasn't try to earn forgiveness by giving up things.

We must recognize the connection between John's separated life and his power with God. Jesus himself said there was never a man greater than John the baptist. He preached the message of God with a power that few, if any ever had.

I'm certainly not trying to imply that if we give up the luxuries of this world we will automatically have power with God. It wasn't just John's sacrifice of things that gave him power. It was his dedicated life.

His lifestyle may have not been easy, but I'm sure if we asked him, he would say it was worth it.

*Mt 11:9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.*

John certainly was a prophet. Like all true prophets, John had strong moral convictions (Mt.3:7-8), he led a clean life, he had a zeal for the things of God, he was fearless, and he preached the Word without fear or apology (Mt.3:2-3). John's life was one that put Jesus Christ first and himself last (Jn.3:30).

John lived such a spiritual life that people wondered if he was the Messiah (Lk.3:15). He was indeed a unique individual. John had taken the Nazarite vow. This was a vow whereby a Jew would dedicate themselves to the Lord and His will (Num.6:1-21).

The Nazarite vow consisted of three things.

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

Abstaining from wine and all products of the vine shows of a life that is not controlled by temporary pleasures.

This part of the Nazarite vow deals with a person who is resisting a life of ease and is dedicating themselves to the spiritual matters of life.

TWO... they were forbidden to cut their hair. Nu 6:5

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

THREE... they were to not touch or come close to any dead body even if a parent or sibling dies. Nu 6:6-7

The separation from dead things speaks of desire to avoid any thing that is corruptible. Touching a dead body made a person ceremonially unclean.

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

Usually, this vow was taken for a limited period of time (Num.6:8,13a). However, John had made this vow for life.

Jesus said John was a prophet, but more than a prophet. What did he mean? John was a prophet in that he told what was going to happen. But, he was more than a prophet because his life was a display of prophecy.

*Mt 11:10 For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.*

John was one of the ones the Old Testament prophets prophesied about. He not only preached the Scripture, he was a fulfillment of Scripture.

He was the forerunner the Old Testament spoke about (Isa.40:3; Mal.3:1; Mt.3:3).

*Mt 11:11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*

Jesus said there is no one greater than John the baptist. What a statement. This is not the opinion of a man. This isn't what one of John's best friends would say about him. This is God speaking. Jesus didn't say this just to make John feel better; he said it because it was the truth.

Who do you think is the greatest of all believers? Would you say it was Abraham, or Moses, or David, or maybe Elijah? Jesus said the greatest was John the baptist.

John was greater than all the Old Testament prophets because he actually lived what they only talked about. He was the fulfillment of what they wrote about. They wrote about the forerunner, John was the forerunner. John had the privilege of introducing the Messiah to the world.

John was the greatest because he was the end of the Old Testament prophets and the beginning of the New Testament believers.

Jesus' response not only helps to assure John, but it also defends John's reputation against those who would use this attack his character. As with us, there were many in that day that would love to defame one of Jesus' disciples. If his disciples can be defamed the message they preach will be rejected.

Jesus continues by saying, "*notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*". He has just said John the baptist was the greatest of all. Now, he says the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John.

The least in the kingdom is greater than John because he would not live to see the fulfillment of the gospel message. He would not see crucifixion (Mt.27:31-54), or resurrection of Christ (Mt.28:1-6). He would know nothing about the pouring out of the Spirit as Pentecost (Acts 2). He had not known what it was like to have the fulness of the Spirit dwelling in him continually (Jn.14:16).

We who are believers have so much to be thankful for. God has blessed us in so many ways. He has equipped us for whatever battle we face. He has given us the Holy Spirit who enables us to do a work for Him. We have a completed, inerrant bible we can trust. We have a unity with each other that no other dispensation of believers has known.

*Mt 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

To say the least, this is a difficult verse to explain. Jesus said "*from the days of John the Baptist until now*". So, we know he is talking about something that has happened since John started preaching.

He said, "*the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence*". There are two ways to translate this phrase.

One, it can be taken in a negative sense. In other words, Jesus is saying the kingdom of heaven is suffering violence from violent men. The devil is doing all he can to defeat the kingdom. We certainly see this happening. The Pharisees and Scribes have done everything they can to stop the kingdom. They will not quit until they have the Son of God crucified.

Two, it can be taken in a positive sense. In other words, Jesus is saying the kingdom is suffering violence by those who are flocking to John and the message he preached. These people are so eager to hear the message they rush to John, and later to Jesus.

The publicans, harlots, and sinners flocked to John and Jesus. They did not have the pride the Pharisees had. They recognized their need of forgiveness. With earnest (violently) they sought the forgiveness offered them.

Jesus uses the word "violence" because of the battle a lost person goes through when under conviction. If you are truly saved, you will remember this fight. No doubt, it was violent.

- There's the battle with the devil

The devil fights for the soul of the lost person. He does all he can to stop the person from getting saved.

- There's the battle with the flesh

There is a battle with the flesh of the lost person. The flesh does not want to give up the sin. The flesh resists the convicting work of the Holy Spirit and does all it can to keep the lost person from getting saved.

- In John's day, there was the battle because of persecution

Those who trusted Christ in John's day knew they would be persecuted for their faith. I doubt if there were many false professions when John or Jesus preached. The sinners realized the cost before they believed on Christ. If anyone made a profession, they meant business.

There is still a cost for being a disciple of Christ. The disciple's cross has not been taken away. I am grieved by the so-called evangelism of our day that makes the sinner think there is no cost in getting saved. Many sinners are led to believe getting saved is the way to get rid of all your problems and be guaranteed a life of health and wealth.



Jesus talked about a violence with those who are thinking about getting saved. We need this type of “violence” among believers. How different would the cause of Christ be if all believers sought the Lord’s will violently?

What is every Christian was violent in serving God? John certainly was. What if every preacher prepared and preached his messages with a violence? What if every Sunday School teacher was violent in their preparation of their lessons? What if every Christian sought to win the lost with a violence? What a difference we would see in our churches.

*Mt 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.*

The “law” is speaking of the first five books of the Old Testament. The “prophets” is speaking of the rest of the Old Testament.

All the prophets of the Old Testament were leading to the time of John the baptist. Every message preached in the Old Testament was pointing towards the one who would point to Jesus. The prophets announced, “the Messiah is coming”, only John could announce, “the Messiah is here”. In John the old was fulfilled and the new began.

*Mt 11:14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.*

Elias is the greek mode of the Hebrew word Elijah.

Jesus explains how John is the fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy (Mal.4:5-6). He will say later that Elias had come but they would not accept him (Mt 17:11 ). He did not mean John was Elijah come back from the grave. John himself said he was not Elijah (Jn.1:21). Jesus is saying John was a man much like Elijah. When describing John the baptist the angel Gabriel said he would go “in the spirit and power of Elias” (Lk.1:17).

John was *like* Elijah. He was rugged, nonconforming, and had the Spirit of God upon him.

A note of interest: Elijah did not die. He went to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kgs.2:11). Elijah may come again before the Second Coming of Christ. More than likely, he will be one of the two witnesses that will preach during the Tribulation Period (Rev.11:3-12).

*Mt 11:15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

This statement reminds us the importance of the Spirit in revealing truth. Unless the Lord opens our ears, we will not hear. The things of God are spiritually discerned (1 Cor.2:14).

Jesus spoke because he wanted people to accept his message. He didn’t talk just to hear himself speak. His message had the power to change lives. His message was able to bring forgiveness, peace, joy, and contentment.

But, his message was one that cut deep. It revealed the truth about a person. It showed them their sin and their need of forgiveness. Those who would hear him, he would help. Those who refused his message, he could do nothing for.

As in Jesus’ day, it is vitally important that we be open to what the Spirit says. Those who are open to the truth will find the knowledge they need in Jesus’ words. Spiritual truth is received by the Spirit of God.

## OPPOSITION TO THE KING 11:16-24

*Mt 11:16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,*

Jesus draws a word picture to describe the people of his day. He likens them to little children that couldn’t be satisfied. He says they are like the little children who play in the market.

The market was an open area in the middle of town that was set up all types of goods. Venders would bring their items to sale, so it was full of people and activity. These families would bring their children when they came to the market. These children would join their friends whose parents had also there, and they would play games while their parents shopped.

*Mt 11:17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.*

Jesus said, “*we have piped unto you*”. He’s talking about the games the children played while at the market. One of the games they played was wedding. They would pretend to be at a wedding. They would laugh and sing as though they were actually at a wedding.

Jesus also said “*we have mourned unto you*”. Another game the children played at the market, was funeral. They would pretend to be at a funeral.

They would pretend someone had died and they would cry and moan as though they were really at a funeral.

But, notice what else Jesus said. He said, we piped, “*and ye have not danced*”. He said, we mourned, “*and ye have not lamented*”.

He’s talking about children at the market who refuse to play no matter what the game is. The children say “let’s play wedding”, but they don’t want to play wedding. So the children say “if you don’t want to play wedding, let’s play funeral”. But, they don’t want to play funeral either.

So, what does Jesus mean? He is pointing out the fact that those who he is speaking to are never satisfied. He continues this thought in the next verse.

*Mt 11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.*

John came with a somber attitude. He didn’t drink wine, he fasted often, and he avoided all types of worldly amusements. And how did they treat him? They said he had a demon.

Just like the little children in the market. They didn’t want anyone so serious. They weren’t interested in a lifestyle so extreme.

*Mt 11:19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.*

Jesus continues his explanation of the people by reminding them about himself (*Son of man*). Jesus went to weddings (Jn.2:3), he went to funerals (Lk.7:11-16), he was a friend to those in sin, yet they rejected him just like they did John.

John lived in the wilderness and they said he was out of his mind and had a demon. Jesus lived among the people and they said he was a drunk and a partier. This was a proof of their hard hearts. The bottom line is, if someone doesn’t want to hear the message, they will think of some excuse not to.

A note: Jesus didn’t partake of their sin but he did all he could to reach them. One of the worse mistakes of the modern church is our idea of separation. We should be separate from the world (2 Cor.6:17; 2 Cor.7:1; Nu.16:21, 26; Isa.52:11). However, if we are to reach the world for Christ we must associate with the sinner. Certainly, we should not be their best friend, and partake of their sin, but we should reach out to them in Christian love.

Jesus is making the point that even though his and John’s their style of ministry was different, their message was the same. It shouldn’t be the style of preacher but the content of the preacher’s message we are interested in.

I am grieved about how we are so controlled by personality and style in our day. If the preacher isn’t our style of preacher, we don’t even want to hear him. Style and personality shouldn’t be the most important factor, the content of what they preach should be most important.

The wonderful thing about the work of God is the fact that He will use totally different people. Whether it’s the leather lunged country preacher, or the polished up-town orator, God will use anyone who is willing.

Jesus said “*wisdom is justified of her children*”. He’s saying wisdom is proven by its results.

The wisdom in John’s and Jesus’ message was proven to be true by the changed lives. They may doubt the methods of John and Jesus, but they could not deny the results. Lives had been changed by the power of their message.

The wisdom of John’s message which spoke of the need to repent, and the wisdom of Jesus’ message that spoke of the way to salvation was proven to be true by the lives that had been changed. The proof was in the results.

I can testify to this fact. I believed the message of the gospel and it changed me. I am not the person I used to be.

*Mt 11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:*

In this verse Jesus lets us know the primary reason he did the miracles he did. He did it that they might repent. All he did was in an effort to get them to see their need of forgiveness.

Jesus begins to talk about the price of ignoring the voice of God. He rebukes the cities that had ignored his message.

They rejected him in spite of the fact that he did many unexplainable works in these cities. They had refused to repent, and they would pay.

*Mt 11:21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.*

This verse tells us that God knows all things. He even knows what would happen if things had been different. He knows what would have happened if you had been born in another country, or at a different time, or a different sex. He knows what would have happened if you had gotten that job you wanted so much. I'm glad we have such a God.

He mentions two cities by name. Chorazin and Bethsaida were cities near Capernaum where Jesus had his headquarters for a while. They were witnesses to so many mighty works; they certainly should have believed and accepted Jesus.

John said if everything Jesus did was written, the world could not contain the books that would need to be written (Jn.21:25). There is no telling what all these people saw and heard. Yet, with all his miracles, they rejected him and his message.

Jesus also speaks about Tyre and Sidon. Tyre and Sidon were cities on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea. They were seaport cities so they were filled with sin of every sort. They had all the riches, the luxury, and the debauchery their wicked hearts could desire. Both of these cities were deep into Baal worship. The Old Testament speaks of the wickedness of these cities (Isa. 23:1-17; Amos 1:9; Joel 3:6)

Had the works Jesus did in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in "sackcloth and ashes". Sackcloth was a coarse material, like canvas. The extremely poor dressed in sackcloth but it was also worn as a sign of intense grief. The Jews would throw ashes on their heads to express extreme grief (Job 1:20; Jer.6:26). Jesus is saying they would have repented in a deep and genuine sorrow.

*Mt 11:22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.*

In the eyes of a Jew, there was no place more wicked and more deserving of punishment than the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Yet, Jesus said their punishment will be less than that of Chorazin and Bethsaida.

More "tolerable" indicates there are degrees of punishment in hell. The bible makes it clear, there will be different degrees of punishment in hell (Ps.62:12; Pro.24:12; Jer.17:10; Ezk.18:20, 30; Rom.2:6; Rev.20:12).

We should not assume from this that there will be some in hell who will not suffer. All who end up in hell will suffer indescribable agony. Those who suffer the least in hell will be in indiscernible pain (Lk.16:23-24).

One of the greatest factors that determine the degree of punishment is the light the person had. Those who have more light are more accountable. Jesus talked about a servant (Lk. 12:47). The servant knew his lord's will but did not do it. Therefore, he was beaten with many stripes. In other words, he suffers a greater punishment.

Those who sit in church, hear the Word, see God move, and still reject Him, are the ones who will suffer the worse punishment in hell. It isn't just the amount of sin they committed, it's the amount of light they had.

*Mt 11:23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.*

Capernaum was a city on the north-west corner of the sea of Tiberius. Jesus spent a good bit of time in and around this city. He did many mighty works there. He healed the centurion's servant (Mt.8:13), he raised Peter's mother in law (Mt.8:15), he healed the demoniac of Gadara (Mt.8:28-32), and he healed the paralyzed man (Mt.2-8).

Jesus also mentions Sodom in this verse. We all know about the ungodliness of Sodom (Gen.19). He says if the works that were done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, they would have repented, and God would not have been destroyed it.

Jesus speaks in figurative language in this verse. Capernaum had, as it were, been “*exalted unto heaven*” by the blessing of having the God in flesh walk in their midst and do so many great works. But, it would be “*brought down to hell*” because they had rejected the Lord. As Jesus predicted, in less than forty years Capernaum was destroyed by the Romans.

If Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum are bound for judgment, how much more is America? Our country was founded on godly principles. We have been blessed with so much light. We have so many modern marvels to aid us to know the Word of God. I fear what might be ahead if we don't repent quickly.

*Mt 11:24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.*

The cities that didn't accept Jesus were judged in this life but the individuals in those cities will be judged in the next life. Every lost person will stand before God at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

If someone asked me which was the most wicked city in the bible, I would probably say Sodom. But, Jesus says the most wicked is the city of Capernaum. It wasn't because of their horrible sins. As far as we know they were not guilty of such deeds. It wasn't because of homosexuality, or drunkenness, or harlotry. We have no record that indicates they were involved with the things.

Jesus implied that Capernaum was the most wicked city simply because they ignored his message. They didn't mistreat him horribly, they didn't arrest him, and they didn't whip him, all they did was ignore him.

This lets me know that the worse sinners are not those who are into the most vile deeds we could think of, the worse sinners are those who think they good enough to where they don't need forgiveness. Even God can't help the person who will not admit they need help.

*Mt 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*

Before I make any comment about the meaning of this verse I'd like to address the title Jesus gives his Father. He called Him “*Lord of heaven and earth*”. I am so glad that is true. He is indeed the Lord of everything. He is Lord of what you're going through right now, hear Him, trust Him, and obey Him.

When Jesus talked about the wise and the prudent (learned) he was talking about those who *thought* they were wise and prudent. Man's philosophy has always been contrary to the gospel message. Jesus probably has the Pharisees and scribes. Their pride refused to allow them to admit their need.

The time came when God “*hid these things*”. If a lost person refuses to believe long enough, God will fix it where they can't believe. He will blind them to the truth.

The Lord “*revealed them unto babes*”. He is looking for those who will become like a little child. Someone who is sincere, humble and willing. A child accepts what they are told without hesitation. That's the kind of faith God looks for. God goes after the foolish, weak, base, and the despised (1 Cor.1:27-28).

This certainly doesn't mean God never deals with an educated or learned person. Certainly He does. There many examples of learned men and women in the bible and in life. But, for the most part, those who of this sort find it too difficult to admit their sin and their need of forgiveness. Unfortunately, more times than not, the more a person learns, the more they believe they can depend on themselves.

*Mt 11:26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

He did it because He wanted to. He did it because it was the right thing to do.

*Mt 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*

This verse is rich. It says exactly what is meant to be said. Jesus has all authority over all things (Mt.28:18; Jn.13:3). He had already shown his authority over disease, sickness, demons, and even death. He also has authority to judge the guilty, forgive the repentant, and help the needy. He has the authority to offer salvation to those who will accept him.

We are reminded of two things in this verse. First, how limited we are. Second, how limitless God is.

Jesus said, “*no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son*”. No one can understand God, but God. Man does not have the ability to comprehend God. How could a feeble human really know the God who spoke the universe into existence?

He continues by saying, “*and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him*”. We may never know God completely but we can know Him. We can know Him only when the Son reveals Him to us.

Paul tells us the natural man cannot receive the things of God because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14). He also tells us that even though spiritual things are not understood with natural means, the Spirit reveals these things to us (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

Only the Son can open the eyes of man and reveal God. I wonder how those who heard these words felt. They had rejected Jesus and his message, and now he tells them he is the only way they can know God.

## THE KING'S INVITATION 11:25-30

*Mt 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Jesus gives the first invitation found in the New Testament. The Bible contains many invitations from God (Isa.45:22; Isa, 55:1-3; Jn.6:35; Jn.7:37; Rev.22:17).

### THE WHO OF THIS INVITATION

Who was Jesus inviting?

Primarily, this invitation was directed to Israel. However, this invitation is still offered today for anyone who will listen. This invitation is for anyone who labors and is heavy laden.

### THE WHY OF THIS INVITATION

Why did Jesus offer this invitation?

Jesus gave this invitation because there were some Jews who were doing the best they could to keep the Old Testament law. Jesus referred to these people as those that "labor". They were working hard trying to keep the law.

However, the load these people were trying to carry was not just keeping the Old Testament law. They also had the burden of trying to keep the man-made traditions that had been added to the law. Traditions were man-made rules that were added to the law and passed from one generation to another. There were hundreds and hundreds of these traditions. They eventually added so many of these man-made rules that they elevated their rules above the Old Testament scripture. They came to the point to where they believed it was worse to break the traditions, than to break the scripture. Jesus would say later the Pharisees were actually shutting up the kingdom of heaven by their traditions (Mt.23:13). He would go so far as to call their traditions a transgression of the commandments of God (Mt.15:3).

That's why Jesus used the word "labor". The word "*labour*" gives the idea of working to the point of exhaustion. Jesus was talking to those who have been laboring in an attempt to find favor with God by keeping all the rules. The Jews were loaded down by their rituals, holy days, ceremonies, and man-made requirements.

Jesus gave this invitation because there were some who were "*heavy laden*". He was talking to the person who to whom the rules had become more than they could bear. The load had become overwhelming. All day, every day, there was nothing but rules, and it had become more than they could handle.

They had been taught the way to find favor with God was to keep all the rules. So, they worked, they tried, they did the best they could, but it didn't work. They didn't have peace, they weren't at rest, and the more they worked, the worse they felt. They didn't feel any better because keeping the rules cannot produce favor with God.

Things have not changed. There are many who still teach the way to find favor with God is to keep all the rules. Earning salvation by doing good is one of the many rules that has been added by man.

When we leave the Word of God for our traditions we are headed for trouble. On one occasion the Pharisees and scribes asked Jesus why his disciples did not live according to the tradition of the elders (Mk.7:5).

Jesus' response was sharp, to the point, and truly revealing. He called them hypocrites and pointed them to the Word of God. He said they were teaching the doctrine and commandment of men (Mk.7:6-11).

We need to stay with what the Bible says and not what has been added by man.

What made it worse was the fact that as hard as they tried to keep the law, they kept failing. The Jews were laboring to keep all the rules, but they kept failing. In spite of their best effort they still sinned.

That shouldn't surprise us. That's true of us all. At our very best, we are still horrible sinners. The bible says we all are unclean and all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of God (Isa.64:6). We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom.3:23). None of us are righteous (Rom.3:10).

So, Jesus speaks to these people who have tried their best to follow all the rules, yet they know they have failed. They were overwhelmed with the guilt of their failure. All their work at keeping the rules was doing nothing with their guilt. The weight of their sin was overwhelming.

That is certainly understandable. They felt guilty because they were sinners and they had sinned. They may have kept much of the law, they did not keep all the law. No one can keep it all. And, the bible says to break one law is to break it all. If we break one law, we have broken it all. James 2:10 says, For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

The law is like a pane of glass. You don't have to shatter the entire pane in order to break it. If you break one little spot you have broken the entire pane. So it is with the law.

So, Jesus likens the lost person to someone who is laboring, but at the same time, carrying a heavy load. Imagine working all day on a strenuous job and the entire time you're carrying a two hundred pound weight on your back.

So, Jesus gave this invitation because there were some people who were tired of trying.

#### THE WHAT OF THE INVITATION

What does Jesus offer? He offers rest. Jesus' invitation was to those who needed rest. He says if you want rest you will get it only from me.

But, what does Jesus mean when he says he will give rest. What is rest?

First, rest means to cease from labor or work. God "rested" on the seventh day (Gen.2:2). That doesn't mean God was tired and needed a rest from working to create all things. It simply means God had finished His work, so He stopped working.

When God finished His creative work, it was complete. Nothing else needed to be done, nothing else could be done. In like fashion, the work of salvation was completed by Christ. Nothing else needs to be done, nothing else can be done, for it is finished (Jn.19:30).

Jesus is saying to those who have tried to gain salvation by doing good works, you're efforts are futile. We don't have to do any work in order to be saved. Salvation has never been by works. In fact, the opposite is true. Salvation is a work God does in the heart of a person, it isn't a work that person must do. Salvation has always been by grace (which means it is of God) and not of works (Rom.3:20; Gal.2:16; Eph.2:8-9; Ti. 3:5).

Jesus said to the Jews, and to us, you can quit working, it isn't helping anyway.

Secondly, rest means to cease from war. A lost person is fighting against God, they are at war with God, they are actually the enemy of God (Rom.5:10).

Accepting Jesus' invitation means they give up, they quit fighting against God. It's like the gun fighter who gives up to the sheriff in the old cowboy movies. It means they surrender their all to Jesus. The fight is over.

Thirdly, rest means to lie on. When we lie on a bed we don't lay there trying to hold ourselves up. We are completely dependent on the ability of the bed to hold us up. True salvation comes to those who put their trust totally in the Lord. The rest Jesus offered comes to those who put their total dependence on the Lord. They quit trying to earn God's favor, they stop trusting themselves at all and start trusting God only.

Salvation isn't me trusting him and me; it's me trusting only him. That's what a lost person must do if they are to receive his rest. They stop trying on their own. To receive his rest we must stop all self-effort, and we stop trying to earn favor with God by doing good.

*Mt 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

Jesus continues his call to the weary soul.

A yoke was a piece of wood that had been carved to place across the back of an ox. Many times they would actually carve the yoke to fit a particular ox precisely. This would keep the yoke from rubbing the ox and causing injury.

Jesus isn't telling the Jews they had to add another yoke to their already overlaid lives. He is asking them to exchange their yoke, for his.

Their yoke was the yoke the Pharisees had laid upon them.

It was the yoke of keeping the law, the yoke of self-effort, the yoke of following all the man-made traditions, it was a heavy yoke. In fact, it was impossible to bear.

But, Jesus' yoke was an easy yoke. His yoke was the yoke of repentance and faith. His yoke includes the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who enables us to do his will.

His yoke does involve service, but it is a service that is delightful. It is an honor to serve the Lord. There's no greater thrill than to be used of the Lord.

Jesus' yoke is easy because he is "*meek and lowly in heart*". He was the opposite of the Pharisees. He doesn't add burdens, he wants to relieve us of burdens.

Jesus said "*learn of me*". Accepting Jesus' invitation and embracing his plan of salvation enabled a person to learn about Jesus. The more they learned, the more they would love him.

*Mt 11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

The yoke of the law, of self-effort, of works, or of doing our best is a heavy yoke. But, Jesus' yoke is easy. Man-made yokes are heavy, but Jesus' yoke is light. Jesus' yoke is not grievous, it is a blessing to serve the Lord. He enables us by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to do his will.

Jesus promised rest to the souls of those who came to him. God said the same type of thing in the Old Testament. He said, "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer.6:16).

Unfortunately, they weren't any more interested in Jeremiah's day than they were in Jesus' day. Their response is given in that same verse, they said, "We will not walk therein".

The sad thing about all this was the fact that many heard Jesus' invitation and rejected it. Many had labored for years to keep the rules, had failed miserably, and yet they refused to admit their failure and turn to Jesus.

Many are doing the same thing today. He still calls to those in need. His invitation still stands.

I cannot leave these verses without mentioning how urgent Jesus' invitation was, and is. This invitation demands a response. This was not a just a few trivial words that Jesus spoke frivolously. This is an invitation. This was supposed to bring people to a decision. In fact, everyone who has ever heard these words made a decision. They decided to heed Jesus words and accept his invitation, or they decided to reject his invitation.

Do you hear his voice? He says "come unto me". He did not say, stop sinning and come, he didn't say, improve yourself and come, he simply said, "come". You can come as you are. It doesn't matter what you've done, just come just as you are.

You may be the most religious person on earth, but you still need Christ, so come to him. You may be the most wretched sinner on earth, you still need Christ, so come to him. To you he says "come". Will you accept or reject his invitation? There is no middle ground.

ANOTHER APPLICATION OF THESE VERSES...

Even though Jesus is speaking to those who are lost, I can't help but believe the principles in these verses can be applied to those who are saved.

Many who are saved find themselves troubled, burdened, worried, or weary. Unfortunately, when we get saved we don't always rest in Christ.

Jesus' invitation can be applied to the Christian.

- For the Christian Jesus' invitation pertains to Lordship

Jesus just stated that his Father had delivered all things unto him (v.27). He is the LORD, he is over all things. If we expect his rest, we must allow him to truly be LORD of our lives.

When we come to him we can rest assured we are coming to someone who can assist us with our need

The fact that Jesus said "come unto me" proves that he is the source of rest. Our help comes from him and from nowhere else. He is the ONLY source of rest. All real help will come from him.

- For the Christian Jesus' invitation pertains to listening

He says "*come*". If we expect to enjoy the rest Jesus offers, we must listen to him. The Christian walk is a day by day affair. We follow where he leads.

For the Christian Jesus' invitation pertains to labor

As we have already seen, the word "rest" has the idea of ceasing from work.

A yoke was an instrument of service. Jesus makes it clear that accepting him will result in a life of service. He doesn't want us to just goof off until we go to heaven. We aren't saved by our good works but if we really get saved, we will do good works.

The Jews labored every day to try to live good enough to please God. Jesus told them to quit trying on their own. All their effort would not get them one step closer to God.

In like fashion, all of our self-effort will not give us rest. Trying in our own power to do God's will doesn't work. Until we learn that our ability is useless, we will never enjoy rest.

- For the Christian Jesus' invitation pertains to load

Jesus talks about those who are "heavy laden". The best thing that could happen to any Christian is for them to get tired of the load. When we finally get sick and tired of the load, then, and only then will we really turn to the Lord for help.

- For the Christian Jesus' invitation pertains to love

Jesus offered this invitation to the very ones who hated him. He did it for one reason, he loved them. For God so *loved* the world explains it all. He loved us while we were sinners (Rom. 5:8). I believe Jesus' heart was broken as he spoke these words.

If he loved us when we were his enemies, certainly he loves us after we get saved. Remember, he really does love you.

- For the Christian Jesus' invitation pertains to leaving

You can't "come" unless you're willing to "leave" where you're at. The idea is, quit doing what you've been doing. Stop trying to earn God's favor by your good deeds. Lay all that down and come to Jesus.

For the Christian, leaving means to leave behind those things that keep us from having the rest we so desperately need. We cannot have God's rest and the things of the world. We have to decide which is more important to us. One question, what in this world is worth forfeiting God's rest?

- For the Christian Jesus' invitation pertains to leaning

To rest means we put our trust in that which we are resting on. We rest on a bed. It means we are trusting the ability of the bed to hold us up. We don't help the bed, we simply trust the bed.

So it is with Jesus' invitation. Those who get rest are those who lean heavily on him and trust him completely. When Jesus said, "come unto me" he was saying we must depend on him.

Salvation is simply a sinner depending on the Lord to forgive them of their sin. Rest for the Christian is simply a Christian depending on the Lord to give them the rest they need. It sounds too simple, but those are the facts.

- Jesus' invitation involves liberty

He said he gives rest. We can be set free from our sin. There is liberty in the Lord Jesus Christ.

With all our modern conveniences, all our super intelligence, all our self-help know how, we still have no rest. Jesus tells us to quit trying, admit our need, come to him, and accept his free gift of forgiveness. Then, and only then will we find true rest.

And so we see, that the answer to the problems of the world can be found in a simple invitation, "come unto me". He offers this same invitation today. He offers it to anyone who will hear his voice, believe, confess, and repent.

The more we learn about him, The more we learn about him, the more we'll learn that there's no reason for stress.

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS CONTINUE TO REJECT THE KING chapter 12



The anger of the Pharisees and religious leaders is even made more evident as we move into this chapter. Their evil hearts of unbelief are proven by their treatment of their Messiah. This is truly a pivotal chapter. Matthew has shown us how Jesus has endured a life of rejection. In chapter 2, Herod tried to have him put to death. In chapter 9, they accused him of blasphemy, of being a friend of sinners, and said he had a demon. By verse 14 of this chapter, they are devising a way to put him to death.

**THE PHARISEE’S ARGUMENT ABOUT THE SABBATH 12:1-13**

*Mt 12:1 At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.*

As Jesus and his disciples are traveling they go through a field of grain. The roads were little more than paths in that day and they passed through the fields. The word “corn” refers to wheat or barley. They knew nothing of the corn, or maize, we are familiar with. The disciples were hungry so as they walked through the fields they grabbed some of the wheat, rubbed it in their hands to loosen the husks, and ate the kernels.

There was nothing wrong with them doing this even though they did not own the property. In fact, God had made provision for those who were hungry or poor. He allowed the poor or hungry to pluck enough grain to satisfy their hunger (Dt.23:25). Farmers were instructed to not harvest the corners of their fields in order that the poor might get what was left behind (Lev.19:9-10). If the harvesters overlooked a sheaf, they were not to go back for it, they were to leave it for the poor (Dt.24:19). So, the disciples were not stealing.

The Pharisees weren’t upset because Jesus’ disciples plucked some wheat. They were upset because they did it on the Sabbath day.

The word “Sabbath” actually means ‘to cease’. It has the idea of a ceasing from labor. The seventh day rest goes back to when God “rested” on the seventh day. This certainly doesn’t mean God was tired or needed to rest. It simply means God was finished, so he stopped his work.

It’s important to remember, the Sabbath day was not instituted until God gave Moses the law (Ex. 20:8-11). God told Israel to work six days, but they were to rest on the seventh. The Saturday rest was the fourth of the Ten Commandments. It was a law that was for Israel only (Ex.31:12-13).

The Sabbath rest was the only non-moral law of the Ten Commandments. The other nine dealt with morals but this one dealt only with ceremony. It was simply a ceremonial rule that was given only to the people of Israel. It was much like the sign of circumcision that God gave to his chosen people.

The fourth commandment is the only commandment that was not repeated in the New Testament. Jesus honored the Sabbath day as he walked the earth because the New Testament economy did not begin until after his resurrection.

Jesus said he did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it (Mt.5:17). Notice the scripture below that demonstrates how the New Testament carries on the spirit of the Ten Commandments.

	COMMAND	NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCE
1 <sup>st</sup>	No other god before me	Mt.4:10; Rev.14:7
2 <sup>nd</sup>	No graven image	Acts 15:20; 1 Cor.6:9; Gal.5:19-20; Eph.5:5
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Take the Lord’s name in vain	Mt.5:33-37; Jam.2:7
5 <sup>th</sup>	Honor father and mother	Mt.15:4-9; 19:19; Mk.10:19; Rom.1:30
6 <sup>th</sup>	Shall not kill	Mt.5:21-22; Rom.1:29-30; 13:9
7 <sup>th</sup>	Shall not commit adultery	Mt.5:27-28; Lk.16:18; 18:20; Rom.7:3; 13:9
8 <sup>th</sup>	Shall not steal	Mt.19:18; Rom.13:9; Eph.4:28; 1 Pet.4:15;
9 <sup>th</sup>	Shall not bear false witness	Mt. 19:18; Lk.18:20; Acts 5:3; Rom.13:9; Eph.4:25
10 <sup>th</sup>	Shalt not covet	Lk.12:15; Rom.1:29; 7:7; 13:9; 1 Cor.6:9-10; Gal. 5:21

I am not suggesting we are required to keep the Ten Commandments in our day. I am simply saying the message of the Ten Commandments continues.

*Mt 12:2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.*

The Pharisees were upset, not because the disciples had broken the Old Testament law, but because they had broken their tradition. Traditions were man-made rules that they added to the law. There were hundreds and hundreds of these traditions.

They eventually added so many of these man-made rules that they elevated their rules above the Old Testament scripture. They came to the point to where they believed it was worse to break the traditions, than to break the scripture.

To their credit, the Jews wanted to protect the law. This is commendable but a problem arose. In an attempt to make certain the law was not broken they added restrictions that God never intended.

Let's take a look the Jewish laws and traditions. The Jews believe that God has spoken through the following sources of information.

#### THE WRITTEN LAW

The Jews believed God gave His message to them through Moses (Ex.20). God had Moses write down what He said. What God had Moses write became the first five books of the Old Testament.

#### THE ORAL LAW

The Jews believed God gave His message to them through what God spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

What God spoke to Moses became what is referred to as the Oral Law. As the name suggests, the Oral Law was not written down at first, it was passed from father to son, and from teacher to student. The Jews believed the Oral Law was needed in order to explain the written law. They believed the Oral Law gave details that were not included in the written law. It was considered much like a commentary of the written law. It explained how the commandments in the written law were to be carried out.

#### THE MISHNAH

The Oral Law remained oral until the second century. Around the year 200 AD, this oral law was written down in a document that is called the Mishnah. The Mishnah is supposed to explain the Oral Law.

#### THE GEMARA

The Gemara (pronounced Guh-mar-uh) is like a commentary on the Mishnah. The Mishnah was given to help explain the law, and the Gemara was given to explain the Mishnah.

#### THE TALMUD

Some rabbis decided to put it all together. The Gemara and the Mishnah together are called the Talmud. To further complicate matters, there are two versions of the Talmud, the Babylonian and the Jerusalem Talmud. The entire Talmud consists of 63 tractates (dissertations). In standard print, it is over 6,200 pages long. So, to say the least it is quite exhaustive and can cause confusion.

Christians do not consider the Talmud to be inspired. However, the Jews believed it is to be honored as much, if not more, than the Old Testament scriptures.

There are 24 chapters in the Talmud dealing with the rules relating to the Sabbath alone. These rules can be confusing to say the least. For example, it was forbidden that you travel more than 3,000 feet from your house on the Sabbath. However, if you planted food on Friday that was 3,000 feet away from your home, you could go where the food was. Since there was food there, you could consider that to be your "home" and you could travel 3,000 more feet.

The Talmud has many rules concerning the Sabbath. You could not carry an item that weighed more than a dried fig, or you could carry something that weighed half the weight of a dried fig twice. You could not eat anything larger than one olive. If the olive you put in your mouth was rotten, you couldn't put another olive in, because your mouth had already tasted the olive.

If you threw an object in the air, you must catch it with the same hand you threw it with. If you catch it with your other hand, it would be considered labor and a violation of the Sabbath. If you reached out your hand for your food at the exact moment the Sabbath began, you had to drop your food before you brought your hand back.

A tailor wasn't allowed to carry a needle lest he be tempted to sew something. A scribe wasn't allowed to carry a pen because he might write something. You couldn't examine anyone's clothing because you might find an insect and kill it.

*Nothing could be bought or sold. Nothing could be washed. You couldn't take a bath because the water might spill on the floor and wash it. No fire could be lit. Cold water could be poured on warm water, but warm water could not be poured on cold. A woman couldn't look in a glass because she might see a gray hair and pull it out. You couldn't carry more grain in your hand than would fit into a lamb's mouth.*

The Talmud described what could be saved if a person's house caught fire on the Sabbath. Only the clothes that were absolutely necessary could be saved. One could not put on a robe, and then go back for another one. You could not ask a Gentile to extinguish the fire. If a Gentile put the fire out voluntarily, he was not to be stopped.

The only way a man could eat something bigger than an olive on the Sabbath was if he was about to starve to death. But, how do you determine if a person is truly about to die? How could you say with any certainty that he would not live until the next day? If a man was sick, you could stop him from dying, but you couldn't do anything to make him well. You could put a bandage on him but you couldn't put any medicine on his injury because that would aid his improvement.

These regulations go on and on. The sad thing about it all was the Pharisees and other religious leaders had elevated these man-made rules above the Word of God. There's no wonder they were so mixed up by the time Jesus came on the scene.

Even though at the time of Jesus the Pharisees did not have all these traditions in writing, they did have it in their belief system.

And so we see the reason why the Pharisees were so upset at Jesus' disciples. They thought the disciples were breaking the Sabbath. And, according to their distorted view of the law, they were. But, according to God's law, they were not.

Verse two says the Pharisees "saw" the disciples pluck the wheat. It's obvious they following Jesus and his disciples. They looking for a chance to attack them.

We learn a great deal about the Ten Commandments and the Old Testament Law in the following verses. I'm afraid we see the Ten Commandments just a bunch of rules. There is much more to these commands that merely rules to follow.

The first part of the Ten Commandments deal with loving God by being faithful to Him. The second part of the Ten Commandments deal with loving our fellow man. Jesus said the summary of the Ten Commandments is loving the Lord your God, and loving your neighbor as yourself (Mk.12:30-31).

Jesus' response to the Pharisees in these verses reveal at least four things about the Sabbath laws. First, the Sabbath law was never meant to ignore human need (vv.3-4). Second, it wasn't meant to restrict anyone from serving God (vv.5-6). Third, that God desires mercy more than sacrifices (v.7). Fourth, Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath (v.8).

#### **JESUS EXPLAINS HOW THE SABBATH LAW WAS NOT MEANT TO IGNORE HUMAN NEED 12:3-4**

*Mt 12:3-4 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?*

Jesus responds by asking them "Have ye not read". They believed themselves to be masters of the Law, not Jesus is asking them if they had not even read a portion of it. This had to strike a sour chord with the Pharisees.

Jesus points the to the Word. That's where we find all our answers. That's where we find the truth.

The instance Jesus refers to is in 1 Samuel 21:1-6. David and his men were running from Saul and were tired and hungry. David asked Ahimelech the priest to give him some bread for himself and his men. The only bread available was the shewbread in the Tabernacle. The law said that twelve loaves of unleavened bread were to be laid on the table in the holy place in the tabernacle. These loaves were to be replaced with fresh loaves every Sabbath. The loaves that were removed were to be eaten by the priests only (Ex. 29:32-33; Lev.24:5-9).

God allowed David to eat the shewbread because of their great need. God never intended the law to overrule human need.

It's very important to understand, Jesus is not implying that since David did wrong and got away with it, it is ok if he and his disciples did wrong.

#### **JESUS EXPLAINS HOW THE SABBATH WAS NOT MEANT TO RESTRICT SOMEONE FROM SERVING GOD 12:5-6**

*Mt 12:5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?*

The Pharisees were accusing Jesus and his disciples of violating the Old Testament law by plunking the wheat and rubbing it in their hands. They said they were working on the Sabbath. Jesus counteracts their attack by referring to the priests who serve in the temple on the Sabbath.

Every Sabbath the priests would labor by starting fires (cf. Ex.35:3), killing animals, and preparing them for the sacrifice. Their labor was actually doubled on the Sabbath (Num.28:9-10). In spite of their intense work, the priests were not in violation of the Law because they were doing the Lord's work.

The Sabbath laws were not meant to keep someone from serving God. Jesus is implying that he and his disciples were about his Father's business and were not violating the Old Testament.

*Mt 12:6 But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.*

Jesus was trying to get the Pharisees to see that his disciples were not just serving in the temple, they were serving the God of the temple. He is saying clearly that he is greater than the temple. The Pharisees could not deal with this statement. The temple was the central place of their worship.

We cannot comprehend what the temple meant to them. The temple was the center of their religious lives. There was no place on earth more sacred than the temple. It was God's house, it was the place God visited. To speak against the temple was in essence speaking against God Himself. In the mind of the Jews the only thing greater than the temple, was God Himself. By Jesus saying he is greater than the temple, he is saying that he was God.

The Pharisees were right to respect the temple, but there stands before them one that is greater than the temple. If they honored the building of God, should they not honor the God of the building?

Jesus is unmistakably claiming to be God by this statement. The temple was the holiest place on earth and the Sabbath was their holiest day. Yet, Jesus was more holy than them both.

As marvelous as the temple was, it was still just a building. It was the place that God had seen fit to meet with His people. It was the place that He had blessed with His presence. Yet, it was just a building. Jesus was more than a building, he was God.

When Jesus said he was better than the temple, it was like the last straw that broke the camel's back. As far as they were concerned, Jesus had blasphemed.

JESUS EXPLAINS HOW GOD DESIRES MERCY ABOVE SACRIFICE 12:7

*Mt 12:7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.*

Jesus pretty much tells the Pharisees they don't know near as much as they think they do.

Jesus said he would choose mercy before sacrifice. His words come from Hosea 6:6 where God says, "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings". No doubt, God did require the sacrifices of the Old Testament, but He was more interested in the heart of those who came to Him.

The word "sacrifice" is referring to the entire ceremonial system of the Jews. He's simply saying he desires his people to show mercy instead of following a bunch of their man-made rules.

The Pharisees saw the law as a bunch of mechanical rules. Jesus is trying to get them to understand that God is more interested in the heart of man than a bunch of regulations. Micah 6:8 gives us more insight into this. Mic 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

God wants a people who love Him, and love others, not a bunch of robots who follow all the rules.

Jesus is trying to get them to understand the compassion of the law. God is a God of love and mercy. The Pharisees did not care about those who were suffering. They only cared about their traditions.

In Mark's account of this event, he adds, "*The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath*". He's trying to get them, and us, to realize the law wasn't meant to put God's people in bondage.

*The Sabbath laws were supposed to give the people of Israel a day to rest, a day to focus on their God, and a day to appreciate who He is. The Pharisees and the religious bunch were the ones who made the law a thing of bondage.*

Jesus said, "*ye would not have condemned the guiltless*". Had the Pharisees had any genuine love, they would never have accused Jesus' disciples of doing wrong.

JESUS EXPLAINS HOW HE IS THE LORD OF THE SABBATH 12:8

*Mt 12:8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.*

If he is Lord, he is Lord over all. The Pharisees were so fixated on their rules and restrictions that they had forgotten the God who loved them.

It would do us well to examine our hearts at this point. Why do you do what you do? We say we serve the Lord, but do we serve Him because we love Him? God wants His children to love Him. If we truly love Him, our service will be from the heart. We won't be trying to keep a bunch of rules. Our service for Him will be natural and genuine because it is merely the result of our love for Him.

JESUS GOES TO THE SYNAGOGUE 12:9-13

*Mt 12:9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:*

Jesus goes to the synagogue. Luke tells us this happened a week later (Lk.6:6).

It's vitally important to note that Matthew didn't say "our" synagogue, he said "their" synagogue. It had been God's house, He had moved there, He had done great things for His people there, but they had resisted the Spirit of God to the point to where God wouldn't even call it His house.

Jesus will say later, "*your house is left unto you desolate*" (Mt.23:38). We dare not think the same thing cannot happen to us. How awful would it be to go to church and God not be there?

Jesus knows the Pharisees are upset at him, and yet, he goes straight to the place where most certainly he will be found.

*Mt 12:10 And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.*

A man was in the synagogue who had a withered hand. Luke tells us it was his right hand (Lk.6:6). There were some there who asked Jesus if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. Luke tells us the scribes and Pharisees were the ones who asked this question (Lk.6:7).

It's interesting to note that these hardhearted people are found in church. Things haven't changed much through the years. Unfortunately, the biggest hypocrites can still be found at church. We should notice that not only were the hypocrites at church, but so were the genuine disciples, and so was the Lord. The house of God is still the right place to go. There may be a few who are hypocrites, but that does not give us an excuse to neglect God's house. In fact, we should be even more dedicated to the church. Your church needs someone who is real.

They asked Jesus if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. Their traditions prohibited any type of medicine being used on the Sabbath unless the person was at the point of death. As previously stated, anything that aided healing was forbidden on the Sabbath. In their minds healing the man's hand would be a violation of their laws.

They weren't interested in an answer to their question. They asked Jesus this question in order that they might "*accuse him*". The word "*accuse*" means to bring a charge against.

They wanted to find some way to charge Jesus with breaking the law. They weren't just trying to win an argument. They were wanting to find just reason to have Jesus taken before the judicial system of their day.

There's a good chance the Pharisees actually brought this man to the synagogue in an attempt to trap Jesus.

By their question they were admitting to the fact that Jesus had the power to heal. How could anyone see his miracles and still refuse to believe in him?

*Mt 12:11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?*

They tried to trap Jesus, but Jesus actually trapped them. None of them would have refused to pull a sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath. And yet, they were accusing Jesus of doing wrong by healing the man with a withered hand.

*Mt 12:12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.*

Jesus asked if it was lawful to do well on the Sabbath. It is right to help someone who needs help? Jesus' argument about the sheep in the pit proved it was right to do good on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees thought nothing of helping a sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath, yet they refused to help their fellow man. Man has reached a sad state when he cares more for a dumb animal than he does for his fellow man. Unfortunately, there are many who have reached that point in our day.

*Mt 12:13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.*

Mark tells us the Pharisees were silent (Mk.3:4). What could they say? Jesus was right, and they knew it.

Mark also tells us Jesus was angry and grieved (Mk.3:5). Jesus' anger was justified. His anger was controlled. Most of our anger is selfish and out of control. It should anger us when we see the results of sin. It's right to be angry when we see a little baby suffering because of parents who stay drunk, or a wife going without because her husband gambled their money away. It's also right to be angry when we see people bound in religion as the Pharisees were. They are just as lost as the drunk, or the gambler.

Jesus told the man to stretch out his hand. He did as Jesus said without hesitation. This would seem to indicate that this man had heard about Jesus. He could have explained to Jesus how his condition made it impossible for him to stretch out his hand, but he didn't. He simply did what Jesus told him to do.

When he obeyed his hand was made whole. Getting help from God is always connected to our obedience. I'm not sure why we expect God to give us what we want when we do not obey Him. Those who get God's best are those who obey.

Before we leave these verses I'd like to take one more look at the fact that Jesus went to church.

Will you notice with me....

- Jesus went to church even though it was inconvenient

I promise you, Jesus was busier than any of us, but he made time to go to church. Jesus would never use the excuse, "I'm too busy".

- Jesus went to church even though there were people there who didn't like him

How often do we hear of people who refuse to go to church because there is someone there who they can't get along with? Jesus did not use that excuse.

- Jesus went to church even though he knew someone was there who wanted something from him

Jesus knew the man with the withered hand would be there. So many stay away from church because they don't want to get involved. When will we learn that serving God and helping others is a delight?

- Jesus went to church even though it wasn't safe

Jesus knew the Pharisees wanted to put him to death. All around the world there are Christians who are having to hide in order to worship. They worship in secret because they would be killed if caught. And yet, they are faithful to gather in spite of the danger. I certainly hope we don't stand near these dear saints when we stand before the Lord. I'm afraid there will many who will be truly ashamed of their lack of dedication to God's house.

THE KING BEGINS TO TURN TO THE GENTILES 12:14-21

*Mt 12:14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.*

The Pharisees were not touched by the man's need. They were not moved by the power Jesus displayed that proved he was God. They were set to destroy him.

The Pharisees met together. They met for one purpose, to devise a way whereby they could see Jesus put to death. They were not meeting to decide *if* they should have him put to death, they were meeting to determine *how* they would put him to death. How can anyone be so hardhearted? How could they see the wonderful miracles of Jesus and still turn from him?

Mark tells us the Herodians were included in this attempt to do away with Jesus (Mk.3:6). During the time of Christ there were three Jewish groups who held positions of authority. There was the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and there were the Herodians.

The Herodians were a Jewish political group who were committed to Herod and to Rome. They believed Herod would bring about peace for the Jews. They saw Jesus as a threat. They would oppose Jesus again (Mt.22:16).

The Pharisees and the Herodians did not get along. However, these enemies joined forces in an attempt to do away with Jesus. It's amazing how opposing parties can work together when they have a common enemy.

*Mt 12:15 But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;*

Being rejected by the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus begins his turn towards the Gentiles. God was not surprised by the Jews rejection of His Son. He knew it would happen.

The religious bunch may have rejected him but the common people flocked to Jesus. Great multitudes followed him.

Many of those who followed Jesus were sick. This verse says he healed them “all”.

I must confess. This verse has changed my view about Jesus’ ministry. Before I read this verse I would have guessed that Jesus healed a couple hundred people, at most, while he was on earth. But, this verse says he healed multitudes on this one occasion. There is no telling how many were healed by Jesus. He must have healed literally thousands during his lifetime.

*Mt 12:16 And charged them that they should not make him known:*

I’m convinced this is one of the most difficult commands Jesus ever uttered. How in the world could you be quiet after the Son of God healed you of an awful disease? I’m certain, many of these blessed people failed to obey this command. The news spread like wildfire.

Why would Jesus tell these people to not tell about what he did for them? It would seem that he would want everyone to know. There were times when Jesus did tell those he healed to tell others (Mk.5:19-20).

Why did Jesus tell them to say nothing....

- Because he didn't want second hand information to be given

Jesus realized the danger of second hand information. By the time the news about his healing was told several times, the fact would be distorted. Therefore, he wanted people to see for themselves. Then they would know the truth.

- Because his primary mission was to preach the truth

Jesus healed in order to prove he was God (Act 2:22). He healed also because he truly cared about those who were hurting. But, healing was not the main reason for his ministry. He came to preach the truth and point people to his Father. He wanted them to come for the truth and not his miracles. It is the truth that sets you free, not miracles.

- Because the large crowds actually hindered him

The crowds got so large that he wasn’t able to go to large cities, he had to stay in the countryside (Mk.1:45). There were so many thronging him for a miracle that he wasn’t able to preach. Many who needed the truth were not able to get close enough to hear.

- Because the increase of his popularity angered the scribes and Pharisees

The more popular Jesus became, the greater the Pharisees' hatred grew. God would not allow his arrest, or death, to come before the time was right (Jn.8:20). When the time was right, when Jesus finished the work he came to do, he allowed himself to be arrested (Jn.12:23; Jn.13:1).

- Because it wasn't time for him to become king

The more popular he became, the more the Jews tried to force him to take over Rome, and become their king. The Jews obviously had the kingdom on their minds (Mt.18:1; Mt.20:21; Lk.17:20; Acts 1:6). Jesus would not be forced into setting up his kingdom (Jn.7:6).

- Because he did not seek self-glory

Jesus came to glorify the Father. He did not want any glory to himself. Doing miracles had the potential for a misplaced attention on him. Jesus became a servant (Phil.2:7). He did always that which would please his Father (Jn.4:34; Jn.10:18; Jn.12:27-28).

Since the Jews rejected Jesus, this kingdom has been postponed until after the Great Tribulation Period.

Why did Jesus heal even though he knew it would cause him problems? Because he cared. The Pharisees didn't care for the blind, lame, and infirmed, but Jesus did.

*Mt 12:17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,*

Nothing Jesus did was by accident. It was done to fulfill Old Testament scripture.

*Mt 12:18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.*

Verses 18-21 are quoted from Isaiah 42:1-4. Had the Pharisees simply read these verses, they would have known the Messiah was not going to come with political and military agendas. The Messiah was coming with a gentle and meek spirit.

Jesus came a servant to his Father. His Father was well pleased with him (Mt.3:17; 17:5).

It's always been God's design to change the world through the preaching of the truth. Efforts to change to the politics of our nation may improve our circumstance but it does nothing to change the spiritual corruption of an ungodly nation.

The words, "*shall shew judgment to the Gentiles*" means he will open the way of truth to the Gentiles. He would teach the Gentiles how to please God. Had the Jews simply read these verses, they would have known this.

God wanted to use Israel as a light around the world. But, they rejected His message, and His messenger. So, God turned to the Gentiles. Unfortunately, the Gentiles haven't done much better than the Jews in being that light.

*Mt 12:19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.*

They expected a mighty conqueror but Jesus came proclaiming the need for repentance. He did not cry for retaliation against the Roman government. He didn't march up and down the streets shouting for revolution. Instead, in humility, he proclaimed the way to have true peace.

*Mt 12:20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.*

This verse tells us a great deal about Jesus' attitude. Isaiah said the Messiah would come with tenderness. The day will come when he comes with might and will deliver the nation of Israel (Zech.12:10; 14:4; Mt.24:30; Rev.1:7).

These verses paint a picture of the Messiah's tenderness. He would not even break a bruised reed. A reed was a plant that grew in abundance. A bruised reed was one that had been hit somehow. Maybe someone walked by and brushed against it, bruising it. Of course, the spot where it was bruised would become weak. Those who would later walk by this bruised reed would think nothing of just brushing it aside, and breaking it the rest of the way.

But, Jesus would tenderly care for the reed. He cares for those who are weak. He understands the nature of man.

*Mt 12:21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.*

As previously stated, God was not surprised that the Jews rejected His Son. He knew He would turn to the Gentiles. The Jews had rejected him, (Jn.1:11) but the Gentiles would be more ready to accept him.

The message of the gospel today is, "Whosoever will" (Rev.22:17).

*Mt 12:22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.*

A man is brought to Jesus who is demon possessed. He was blind and dumb because of the demon that lived in him. This shows the evil nature of the devil and all the demons. They hate, they hurt, and they destroy. It also shows the power of the devil and the demons. This man's affliction was produced by the devil. How many of the afflictions of today are demonic? We can't be sure, but the devil certainly has not abandoned this method of attack.

The touch of Jesus dealt with all the issues this man had. I'm glad we have a God who can take care of us no matter what the need. When the devil is dethroned, deliverance comes.

*Mt 12:23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?*

The question assumes a positive response. His works proved he was the Messiah. The term "son of David" was a phrase used in referring to the Messiah (2 Sam. 7:13).

This conclusion was reached by the common people, and not by the Pharisees.

THE SIN OF BLASPHEMY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT 12:24-37

The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is dealt with in these verses.

Much ink has been spilled in an effort to explain Jesus' comments in these verses.



Some believe this sin is something as simple as telling the Holy Spirit to leave you alone. Entire sermons have been preached in an attempt to demonstrate this belief.

Some believe this sin was simply rejecting Christ and refusing to get saved.

Some believe this sin could only be committed while Jesus was on earth. They base this belief on the fact that it was the Son of God who did the miracle. They believe, since Jesus is no longer on earth, this sin cannot be committed.

The sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit is attributing to Satan a work done by the Holy Spirit. Mark tells us this was the case (Mk.3:30). I personally believe this is a sin that could only be committed while Jesus was on earth. Since he is no longer dwelling in a body, the circumstances of this sin cannot be repeated.

The word blasphemy is defined as "defiant irreverence". It can apply to sins such as slandering, defaming, and cursing God, or degrading things related to God. However, the blasphemy in these verses is a specific sin of attributing to Satan a work that God had done. The Pharisees witnessed a miracle that was clearly done by the power of the Holy Spirit, but they said it was done by the power of Satan (Mk. 3:30).

#### THE PHARISEES ACCUSE JESUS OF CASTING OUT A DEMON BY THE POWER OF SATAN

*Mt 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.*

The word "Beelzebub" is just another word for the devil.

The Pharisees heard the comments mentioned in verse 23. They knew this miracle had to have been accomplished by a supernatural power. They did not deny the miracle, they just denied Jesus did it by the power of God. Realizing the miracle was real, they had only two options as to its origin. Either Jesus did this miracle by the power of God, or he did it by the power of Satan. There was no other option. They determined that Jesus cast out the demon by the power of Satan.

There is little doubt about why they came to this conclusion, they simply hated Jesus. If God performed the miracles through Jesus, it proved he was who he claimed to be. They knew Jesus' miracles validated his ministry and proved he was the Messiah. They could not accept that.

The words "this fellow" is a way of saying a nobody. They saw Jesus as nothing. How could they view Jesus in such a manner?

#### JESUS RESPONDS TO THE ACCUSATION OF THE PHARISEES

*Mt 12:25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:*

The Pharisees didn't speak to Jesus, they spoke to the crowd, but Jesus knew their thoughts. Jesus responded to the Pharisees by saying their accusation is unreasonable. Any kingdom that fights against itself can not survive.

*Mt 12:26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?*

The man's sickness was obviously a work of Satan. A demon had caused it. So, if Jesus cast the demon out by the power of Satan, it would have been Satan fighting against Satan.

Jesus is asking the Pharisees if they think Satan is so dumb that he would cast out his own demons. Jesus spent a good bit of his time casting out demons, and healing sickness caused by Satan. If he did it by the power of Satan, the devil had done a lot to destroy his own kingdom.

*Mt 12:27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.*

Jesus responds to the accusation of the Pharisees with another comment. He talks about the "children" of the Pharisees, and how they "cast them out". The Pharisees had disciples who learned their beliefs and practices. These students were called the "children" of the Pharisees. This group of students claimed to be able to cast out demons.

The Pharisees had put their stamp of approval on their disciples. They claimed their disciples did their works through the power of God. Jesus' point is, if you say your disciples are casting out demons by the power of God, how is it that you say I am casting them out by the power of Satan.

A note of interest. It is questionable as to whether these disciples of the Pharisees actually cast out demons. Many false teachers claim to cast out demons. I am convinced there are times when the devil will come as an angel of light and make it appear there are demons cast out. The devil will do whatever it takes to deceive.

*Mt 12:28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.*

Jesus gives another response to the Pharisee's accusation.

The Pharisees entire argument dealt with whether Jesus cast the demon out by the power of God, or the power of Satan. If he cast it out by the power of God, that proved God was working through him. It also proved he was who he claimed to be. The kingdom was before them, in other words, he was the Messiah.

*Mt 12:29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.*

Jesus is saying, if you want to rob a house, you must first bind the owner. The owner will do everything within his power to stop a thief from robbing his house. If the thief is able to bind the owner, he will have free access to all that is in the house. The stronger the owner, the more difficult it is to rob his house.

Jesus had proven many times that he was stronger than the devil. He had proven it by healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead, and forgiving sin. He had just proven his power to bind the strong man by casting out the demon. He had the power to bind the strong man and spoil his house. The devil is strong. he is able to do more than we can imagine. But, he is not more powerful than our Lord.

*Mt 12:30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.*

There is no middle ground. Those who aren't for the Lord, are against him. When we don't do right, we are doing wrong. Those who know to do good, and do not do it, are in sin (Jam.4:17).

*Mt 12:31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.*

The words "Holy Ghost" and "Holy Spirit" both refer to the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. This verse tells us that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is speaking "against the Holy Ghost".

Sin is any attitude, or action, that is against God, and His will. Blasphemy is the specific sin of speaking against God. It is saying things about God that are not true. It is speaking about God in a derogatory manner. The word blasphemy is defined as "defiant irreverence".

Jesus said "All manner of sin and blasphemy" can be forgiven. Of course, he is implying the sinner confesses, and repents. Thank the Lord, God is a forgiving God. He loves to forgive.

To say that all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven is an amazing statement. Jesus said those who drove the nails in his hands can be forgiven. He said, the drunkard, the murderer, the adulterer, the thief, and even the child molester, can be forgiven. But, the person who blasphemes the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven.

*Mt 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*

Jesus said, if someone speaks against the "Son of man", he can be forgiven. The term "Son of man" is speaking of Jesus. The Son could be easily misunderstood. Jesus was a man. He looked like any other man. Even though he was sinless, he was still human. He was born in the lowly town of Nazareth, he worked as a carpenter, he was meek and lowly.

Though wrong, it would be easy to see him merely as a man. It is possible to be forgiven for speaking derogatory things about the Son.

However, Jesus goes on to say, the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven. Why is this so? The Holy Spirit was the means whereby the miracles were accomplished.

To see the Holy Spirit do something that was impossible was to see the power of God on display.

When someone saw a miracle that was obviously a work of the Holy Spirit, and say Satan did it, was the epitome of rejection. There was no forgiveness for this type of sin.

What else could God do? He had sent His Son, He had worked through His Son in the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish a miracle that only God could do. And now, they did not just refuse to believe it was God who did it, they went so far as to say the Son did it by the power of Satan. Could I say it again, what else could God do? There was no more light to show.

There is no forgiveness for this type of person because they had rejected the only means of forgiveness.

*Mt 12:33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.*

A tree is known by its fruit. It has either good fruit, or bad fruit. In like fashion, a person's true nature is revealed by what they do, and what they say. If their deeds and words are evil, it reveals their heart is evil. If their deeds and words are good, it reveals their heart is good.

I believe Jesus is trying to accomplish two things in this verse.

First, he is speaking about himself. He is saying, if his works are good, that proves that he is good. Anyone who was willing to take an honest look at Jesus had to come to the conclusion that he was good. He went about doing good (Acts 10:38). The Pharisees should have recognized this.

Second, he is speaking about the Pharisees. The reason they blasphemed was because their hearts were evil. Their actions, and their words, merely revealed their sinful hearts.

Jesus is telling the Pharisees to make up their minds. If his works and words are good, that must mean he is good. If his works and words, are evil, then he must be evil. They should allow his fruit to speak for itself. They could not deny the fact that his works were good, therefore, he must be good.

*Mt 12:34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*

I've heard many people talk about wishing they could have heard Jesus preach. I'm convinced the average Christian wouldn't be able to handle the type of preaching Jesus did.

Jesus didn't play games with the Pharisees. He calls them a bunch of snakes. The viper Jesus referred to is a poisonous snake. Most of them are small. They are colored in a way that makes it easy for them to hide. The viper waits for someone to get close, and strikes suddenly. They clamp their teeth into the flesh and pump their poison into their victim. Paul was bitten by such a viper (Acts 28:3).

No doubt, Jesus used the viper as an example of the Pharisees because they were dangerous and deadly. Their false doctrine condemned people to an eternal hell.

He called them "evil". What a telling word. We see the depravity of man in this word. Mankind is evil. The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). We have all received the sin nature of Adam.

And so, Jesus has set the Pharisees up for the kill. He has made it clear that the words we speak are from our heart. The Psalmist makes the connection between our hearts and our words (Ps.19:14).

The words of the Pharisees had proven what they were. The word "*abundance*" has the idea of being so full it runs over. In other words, their hearts are so full of evil, it naturally ran over through their words. What's in the well, comes up in the bucket.

Elihu felt like he had to speak, or burst.

Job 32:18–19 For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles.

If we wonder where our questionable words we utter occasionally come from, this verse tells us. They come from our heart. If you want to know what type of person you are, look at what you talk about.

Pr 10:11 The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

Pr 10:21 The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.

*Mt 12:35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*

Jesus' words had proven what he was. The word "treasure" has the idea of a store house, or where we would keep our valuables.

*Mt 12:36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

The word "idle" means a thoughtless, or useless word. This speaks of any word that is spoken that does not have a positive aim. Jesus certainly has in mind the words the Pharisees just uttered. If every idle word will be judged, how much more will the words of the Pharisees?

The word idle also means anything we say that accomplishes no good. Certainly, that would include injurious words like those of the Pharisees.

When we stand before the Lord, we will give an answer to our words, and not just our deeds. We may consider what we say to be unimportant, but our Lord doesn't.

David understood the importance of watching our speech.

Ps 34:13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

#### OUR WORDS CAN BE PROOF

*Mt 12:37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

The Pharisees, like the vipers carried death in their mouths. As with the vipers, their bite proved their evil nature.

Our words prove what we really are. Jesus said, by our words we are justified or condemned. Our words so prove what's in our hearts that they will show if we're saved or not. What a thought. But, it makes sense when we think about it. Jesus said our words are the outlet of our heart. What's inside will come out.

James said the person who doesn't bridle their tongue is deceived, and their religion is useless (Jas 1:26).

If you want to know what you really are, listen to how you talk when things don't go your way. Listen to what comes out of your mouth when the heat is on, when someone jumps in front of you at the grocery store, when the boss complains again, when the waitress is slow, then you'll know how spiritual you are.

It's a shame that waitresses across the country say the rudest people they deal with are the church people on Sunday.

What is in the heart, comes out the mouth. So, we need to be careful about what we take in. We're like a computer, garbage in, garbage out.

#### OUR WORDS CAN BE POINTLESS

The word "idle" in verse 36 means useless. How many of the words do we speak that have no real spiritual value. It has been estimated that, on average, men speak 25,000 words a day, and women speak 30,000 a day. That's an awful lot of words. How many of these words aid in the advancement of God's family?

I'm convinced many of our words are hypocritical. We add our "Christian jargon" when we're around other Christians. I met a preacher one time. I was aware he was a preacher, but he did not know me. We in the home of a mutual friend for several minutes, so I was able to hear him talking. Then, the mutual friend introduced me to him, and let him know I was a preacher. From that moment on, he started saying things like, "praise the Lord", and "thank God" to every other sentence. I wondered where all that Christian talk was before he discovered I was a preacher. I don't doubt this preacher's love for the Lord, I know he was a godly man and served the Lord faithfully, but I think I found out that day what "idle" words are.

When we use words in an attempt to impress others, they are pointless.

#### OUR WORDS CAN BE PROFITABLE

What we say can encourage the discouraged, inform the ignorant, or warn the wicked. We can help others by what we say to them. Don't ever think you can't make a difference. God may use your words to change someone's life.

Paul tells us that our speech ought to always be with grace (Col. 4:6).

Our lips should bring glory to God. We are to teach and admonish one another (Col.3:16). We are to sing forth praises to our God (Col. 3:16).

We defeat the devil by keeping the Word of God in our hearts (Dt.6:6).

#### OUR WORDS CAN BE POWERFUL

James uses the illustration of a bit in the horse's mouth, and the rudder on a ship to show the power of the tongue (Jam. 3:3-4). Both are small, but have the power to control the horse, and the ship.

What you say, may be exactly what the hurting person needs to hear.

Pr 16:24 Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

What you say, may be used by God to convict the wayward saint.

#### OUR WORDS CAN BE POISON

What we say has the power to destroy. James says the tongue is like fire, it can be destructive (Jam.3:6).

Pr 26:22 The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Ps 34:13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

Ps 141:3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.

A godly testimony that takes a lifetime to build, we can destroy in a few seconds. The wisest saint on earth is the one who knows how to control their tongue.

Pr 11:9 An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

God despises lying lips.

Pr 12:22 Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.

Pr 17:27 He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

We should guard ourselves from speaking in the heat of the moment. We should allow the Holy Spirit to control our words. We may say something we will regret. We may apologize, but the damage is done.

Eph 4:29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Col 4:6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Jas 3:2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

Our words can be one of the most helpful, or harmful parts of our lives.

#### OUR WORDS CAN BE PUNISHED

Jesus said in verse 36, "*every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment*". Those who are saved will lose rewards because of some of the things they said.

The word "account" carries with it the idea of "intent". We'll not only give account of what we said, but why we said what we said.

*Mt 12:38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.*

The Pharisees change the subject. That is the tactic of those who are losing an argument. Little did they know, their tactic would fail for Jesus would strike again.

They asked Jesus to show them a sign. If he is the Messiah as he claims, certainly he should be able to perform one miracle.

How could they ask for a sign after all the miracles Jesus had done in their presence? He had healed the sick, raised the dead, and transformed lives. They weren't asking for Jesus to heal someone, or even to raise someone from the dead. They were asking him to do something astronomical. They were wanting him to wave his hand and write his name in fire across the heavens, or to speak the word and the sea part.

They called him "Master", which means "teacher". They certainly didn't learn anything from him because they refused to believe him.

The sad thing about it is, had he done such a miracle, they still would not have believed. If he did all he did, and they refused to believe, neither would they have believed if he had done what they demanded.

Is it not amazing what man expects from God? After all He has done for man, it's never enough.

We who know Him are pretty much the same. After all the good things He sends our way, we still complain when something happens we don't like. Oh, how many spoils brats are in the family of God.

*Mt 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:*

Jesus could have done what they asked, and more. But, he would not allow himself to be used as a pawn. There are many today who demand God give them some proof that He exists. In the process, they prove their ignorance. God is not intimidated by any mortal.

Those who demand a sign reveal their evil and adulterous hearts. Those who know the Lord do not require such a sign. They believe by faith, and are rewarded for it. The bible process has always been, believe and then you will see. The world wants to see, and then believe. The sad thing is, like the Pharisees, after seeing so much, they still refuse to believe.

Notice Jesus calls them "*evil and adulterous*". The word "*evil*" means wicked. The word "*adulterous*" is exactly what we would think, to be unfaithful to a spouse. The relationship of the Jews to God is often referred to as a marriage. They were guilty of spiritual adultery.

God calls Israel adulterous because they have been unfaithful to His covenant with them. The Jews forsook the Lord many times in the Old Testament. They kept slipping back into idolatry (Dt.7:25-26; 12:31; 1 Kgs.11:4-8; 2 Kgs.23:13; Jer. 4:1-2; 7:30; 16:18; Ezk. 5:9, 7:20; 20:30; Hos.9:10). God remains faithful, but man doesn't.

God broke Israel of their idolatry when He sent them into the Babylonian captivity. They never worshipped idols again. This is not to say Israel remained faithful to their God. Even though they did not worship idols, they had still walked away from the will of God and had been as an unfaithful spouse. They didn't worship false gods, but they worshipped their man-made traditions. The Pharisees are a perfect example of this.

*Mt 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

He had already given enough signs to convince the entire world. Jesus told them there would be only one sign. It would be the sign of the prophet Jonah.

As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so would the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Jonah was in the depths of the sea, Jesus was in the depths of the earth. Jonah came out of the fish after three days, Jesus came out of the grave after three days. What an amazing thought. God used the escapades of a backslidden preacher as a prophecy of His coming Son.

These words tell us Jesus believed in Jonah. He believed Jonah got swallowed by a fish, and came out alive three days later.

So, if the Pharisees, or anyone else for that matter, wanted a sign, the one sign Jesus was pointing to was his death, burial, and resurrection.

Jesus was true to his word. The bible does not record Jesus doing any more miracles. He went to Calvary without performing any other supernatural work.

However, three days after he died, he came forth, alive. He walked the earth for forty days and ascended back to heaven (Acts 1:10). If these scribes and Pharisees wanted a sign, Jesus would give them one they could not deny. What greater sign could he give than to come back to life?

And so it is today. If you are looking for a sign from God, look to the empty tomb. There is no greater sign.

*Mt 12:41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*

The people of Nineveh will be a condemnation to the unbelieving Jews because they believed the message of Jonah, and repented (Jonah 3:5-9). They were some of the most ungodly people who ever lived. The preacher who spoke to them was half backslidden, but they listened, they believed, and they got right.

Not only did they repent when they heard God's warning, but God forgave them (Jonah 3:10). If God was willing to forgive the ungodly Ninevites, surely He was willing to forgive Israel. I am so glad we have a God who will forgive. We can trust Him.

Jesus was greater than Jonah in many ways. Jesus was God, Jonah was man. Jesus was perfect. He was God, and without flaw or sin. Jonah was half backslidden even while he preached to Nineveh. Jesus was powerful. He healed the sick, raised the dead, and transformed lives. Jonah performed no miracles. Though these things be true, Nineveh repented (Jonah 3:5), and the scribes and Pharisees refused.

*Mt 12:42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*

Jesus gives another illustration to make his point. The queen of the south is speaking of the queen of Sheba (1 Kg. 10:1).

The words "*the uttermost parts of the earth*" speak for the most distance parts of the hospitable world at that time. She had heard of the wisdom of Solomon and wondered if what she heard was true. There was one way to find out. In her days there were no books to speak of, so she had to go to talk to Solomon herself.

She was willing to travel this great distance in order to learn more about this man. The trek was difficult. Traveling through the dessert was no easy task. We can find the account of her travels in 1 Kings 10:1-7. It is astounding to read about what all she brought with her.

So, here's this Gentile, pagan, idol worshiping woman, traveling miles upon miles to see if what she heard about Solomon is true. We should realize, she is coming without an invitation. She has no idea how she will be received. She has no guarantee that Solomon won't throw her out on her ear. Yet, she comes.

And Jesus said, "a greater than Solomon is here". If Solomon's wisdom was great enough to cause the queen of Sheba to make such a strenuous journey, was not Jesus great enough to believe? The Pharisees should have, at the very least, taken an honest look at Jesus and examined his message.

#### REFORMATION IS USELESS 12:43-45

Jesus tells a story to describe the futility of reformation.

Jesus tells us who this story is about in verse 45. He was talking about "*this wicked generation*". He was painting a picture of the horrible consequences of the Jews continuing to reject the message of Jesus. The Pharisees believed living a ceremonially clean life was how a person pleased God. How wrong they were. By depending on their morals, they were at the same time, rejecting God Himself.

The Pharisees were experts at reforming. They were also a perfect example of how reformation does not work. They depended on their morals to such an extent they saw no need for Jesus, confession, repentance, or forgiveness. After all, what did they have to repent of?

It was the religious bunch who betrayed Jesus. They are the one who demanded his arrest, conviction, and execution. It wasn't the drunks, harlots, thieves, and ungodly, it was the religious bunch.

Therein lies the danger of trusting in our own morality. Morality gives a false sense of security. We see no need for God. The religious person does not see how Satan is working in their lives.

There are some unanswered questions connected to this story. But, there is one thing we can be certain about. The Holy Spirit is not seen anywhere in this story. There is no real conviction, and there is no genuine conversion.

*Mt 12:43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.*

The "*unclean spirit*" is a demon. This word "*unclean*" speaks of its evil nature.

We must remember, Jesus is giving this parable to show the condition of the Pharisees. No doubt, demons are very much involved with the horrible sin throughout our world. However, they are also very much involved with religion. Satan's desire it to keep people from accepting Christ. He could care less if he has to use vile sin, or empty religion to accomplish this goal.

It is scary to realize just how much power, and scope the devil has. He is not omnipotent, but he is powerful. He is not omnipresent, but he moves fast and he has a myriad of demons around the world that are ready to spring to action at his call.

The demon is "*gone out of a man*". The demon leaves the man. We can't be certain whether he left on his own accord, or if he was driven out. Since it seems like he was able to reenter at his will (v. 44), it would seem to me that he left on his own accord.

Considering Jesus' point to this story, the man must have tried to make some changes in his life. We don't know why it happened, all we know is it did happen. Perhaps he realized his lifestyle was not a good example to his children. Maybe he got tired of the hangovers after his late night parties. It's possible he wanted to save the money he had been wasting on his wicked habits.

For whatever reason, this man decided to clean up his life.

He "*walketh through dry places*". The demon goes to the barren land of the desert. This seems to verify the opinion of the Jews, that evil spirits live in the desolate areas of this world (Isa.13:21; Rev.18:2). When the devil tempted Jesus, he did it in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1). We cannot be certain why this demon went to these dry places.

The demon is "*seeking rest*". This evil spirit is restless. This certainly seems to suggest that demons desire a body to dwell in. He is seeking a place where he feels at home. It's disheartening to realize that which gives him rest is a place where he can do his vile work of evil. The corrupt nature of the demon desires the pollution of an evil heart. He is not content to wander, he finds no rest outside of a body. He does his best work for Satan when he has a person to work in, and through.

The devil and his demons are not satisfied unless they are causing havoc. They are constantly seeking a place where they can do harm. Satan told God he had been "*going to a fro in the earth*" (Job 1:7). Peter tells us our adversary "*walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Pet. 5:8).

*Mt 12:44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.*

The evil spirit said, *"I will return into my house"*. The demon did not leave the body because the person got saved, for he could still say it is *"my"* house. It did not belong to the Lord. The demons feel at home in the body of an unbeliever.

When he returns, he finds it *"empty"*. That also tells us the person did not get saved. If he had gotten saved, his body would not be empty, the Holy Spirit would abide there. All true believers have the Holy Spirit abiding in them (Rom.8:9). No matter how rich, successful, beautiful, or popular, the unsaved are empty.

He found it *"swept"*. This person has made an attempt to clean up his life. It doesn't matter what we get rid of, cleaning up our lives will not save us.

He found it *"garnished"*. The word *"garnished"* means *"decorated"*. This person not only stopped doing wrong things, he started doing right things. His life truly *"looked"* better. But, the change was self effort.

*Mt 12:45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.*

The demon got mad when he found his house cleaned. He gets seven demons more wicked than himself, and they enter the man.

This certainly seems to suggest there is a hierarchy in the demon world. The devil is call the Prince of demons. If there is a prince, it would be natural to assume there are subjects under him. I would expect nothing less from the devil. He is a master mind when it comes to organization.

The state of this man was worse at the end than in the beginning. This speaks of his wickedness, but I believe it also speaks of the hardness of his heart. None are so hard, as those who try to reform in an attempt to please God. They refuse to acknowledge the vanity of their good deeds.

These demons enter in and *"dwell"* there. The word *"dwell"* means to live in. It is the same word found in Ephesians 3:17, where Paul says Christ may dwell in your hearts. In other words, these demons are at home, and they plan to stay.

Jesus knew what he was talking about when he said, *"even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation"*. What he said about reformation applies to individuals. The person who reforms will eventually go back to their old habits, and will be worse. What else should they expect. They have rejected the way of peace. The person who looks for happiness and contentment by reforming their lives will be miserable.

He was speaking to the nation of Israel as a whole. There is no doubt, the situation of Israel continued to worsen. In 70 AD, Titus besieged Jerusalem. They destroyed the temple completely. This caused a drastic change in how they worshipped. The sacrificial system ended. Though they worshipped in their homes, and in the synagogues, their lives were never the same.

Before we move on, I feel compelled to address the push for morality we see across our country. I believe the immorality of America is a cancer that will devour us eventually. However, the answer to our dilemma is not morality, the answer is the gospel. We need regeneration, not reformation. The preacher who preaches the truth will preach about living right and will proclaim the horror of a sinful lifestyle. But, he will not suggest this be done apart from the work of the Holy Spirit.

Self-reformation without the life changing work of God, will only make them two-fold the child of hell. We need preachers who know the Spirit of God, we need families that know the Lord and live godly lives, we need politicians who are born again and filled with the Spirit.

The answer to the plague of our, once great, country is in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

RELATIONSHIP INSTEAD OF REFORMATION 12:46-50

*Mt 12:46 While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.*

Jesus had just dealt with the futility of self-reformation. As God would have it, as he was speaking, his family comes, wanting to talk to him. He uses this opportunity to show the difference between reformation and relationship. Christianity is a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus' brothers are mentioned here. Joseph and Mary had children after Jesus. Some claim Jesus did not have earthly brothers, but the bible mentions Jesus' half brothers in all four gospel accounts (Mt. 13:55; Mk.3:31; Lk.8:18-21; Jn.7:3-5). Mark tells us Jesus had sisters also (Mk.6:3).



Joseph was most likely dead since he is not mentioned here. The last time we hear anything about Joseph was when Jesus was 12 years old (Lk.2:41-50). He probably died before Jesus began his earthly ministry. He was not at the cross (Jn.19:26-27). Surely he would have been there had he been alive.

*Mt 12:47 Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.*

Someone tells Jesus his mother and brethren are asking to speak to him.

*Mt 12:48-49 But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!*

Jesus continued to focus on the need at hand. He was speaking truth to those who desperately needed it. He did not take his family lightly, but ministering to those he was speaking to was more important at the time.

Jesus is not rejecting his earthly family. He proved his love for his mother many times (Lk.2:51; Jn.19:25-27). In fact, he is revealing the superiority of a spiritual family. He had said earlier that we should love him more than our family (Mt. 10:37).

As sad as it is, Jesus' brothers did not believe on him until after he was raised from the dead (Jn.7:5). Thank the Lord, they did eventually believe.

The comments of Jesus tell us the strongest relationship on earth is the relationship between Jesus and a believer. We truly are family. I have heard so many say they are closer to their Christian family than they biological family. There is a special bond between believers.

*Mt 12:50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

The one's who do what God says are the true children. If obedience was the only criteria that would determine whether you are saved, would you pass the test? It's easy to say we are saved, but obedience is the litmus test that reveals if we are genuine. We don't obey to get saved, but if we are saved, we will obey.

Jesus was interrupted as he was attempting to do his Father's will. Anytime you try to do something for the Lord, you should expect interruptions. The devil is a master at timing. He knows just when to attack. The phone rang just as you began to pray, the baby cries just as the invitation is given, the friend walks up just as you are witnessing to that lost person.

We must learn how to deal with interruptions. We should determine what is most important. If we don't, the devil will absolutely control our lives. We will have to leave undone some important things, because there is something more important. We must set our priorities, and stick to them.

We are admonished to put the Lord first. Jesus said, "*seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*" (Mt.6:33). I'm afraid our priorities are way out of line. The average Christian is more interested in recreation, than righteousness. We may not be able to control every circumstance of our lives. Interruptions will happen. But, we should make sure our circumstances don't control us.

## THE KING'S MYSTERY 13:1

When we come to chapter 13, Jesus has been rejected as King by most of the Jews. And so, they forfeit the kingdom they could have had. They had waited all their lives for the Messiah and his kingdom. They had longed for the times of refreshing that was promised. And, when he comes, they reject him, and lose the kingdom in the process. You can't have a kingdom if you reject the king.

We are introduced in this chapter to the "mystery" of the kingdom (cf. Mk. 4:11). A biblical "mystery" is something that had once been hidden, but now has been revealed. It does not mean the thing was undiscernable, or even difficult to understand, it simply means God had not yet revealed it. A mystery is simply God revealing His will when the time is right.

The "mystery" of the kingdom is the fact that God knew Israel would reject His Son, that His Son would be crucified, that He would set Israel aside, and He would have the gospel preached to the Gentiles. Paul reveals this in Romans 11:25 and Ephesians 3:4-6.

As we have already mentioned, the kingdom of heaven is a term Matthew used when he spoke to the Jews. Actually, the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of God, is the same thing.

One of the reasons we know this is because in Luke's record of this same event, he used the term "kingdom of God" (Lk. 8:10).

There is one fact we must recognize about the kingdom. We must not forget, the kingdom consists of those who *profess* to be believers. All who profess are not genuine. The parable of the wheat and the tares is a perfect example of this. If we don't keep this in mind, we will be confused.

*Mt 13:1 The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.*

Jesus left the house, went to the sea shore, and sat down. Jesus seldom rested. He knew his enemy never took a break. The devil is constantly "walking to and fro" (Job 1:7). He is walking about, "*seeking who he may devour*" (1 Pet.5:8). And so, Jesus didn't rest long. A multitude came, and his rest ended.

Notice Jesus moved out of the synagogue, (12:9) and was preaching outside. If they didn't want him, he wasn't going to force himself on them.

*Mt 13:2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.*

So many followed him that he was being pushed towards the seashore. No doubt there were small boats beached on the shore, so he boarded one, sat down, and spoke so they all could hear.

*Mt 13:3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;*

### JESUS SPEAKS IN PARABLES Chapter 13

Chapter 13 marks a drastic division of this book. Jesus has preached, healed, and helped multitudes, but the Jews have, for the most part, rejected him. So, he turns toward the Gentiles like never before. This chapter contains parables Jesus spoke. Of all Jesus' recorded words, one third are parables. This tells us these stories are important.

#### SOME FACTS ABOUT PARABLES

- A parable is a allegorical story designed to teach a truth, spiritual principle, or moral lesson

A parable is, "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning". A parable uses a picture we do understand to reveal a truth we do not understand. A parable carries with it the idea of "comparing". It has the idea of laying something along side so you can compare. A spiritual truth is compared to a natural truth.

- A parable never uses a common name

A parable may speak of "a certain man" as in Mark 12:1, but a common name is never given in a parable. That's why we know the story about the rich man and Lazarus is not a parable.

- A parable emphasizes one primary truth

There may be many truths in a parable, but there is always one primary truth the parable centers on. Therefore, we need to be careful to not try to squeeze truth from every word, or detail of the story.

- There are no two parables that teach the exact same truth

God never wastes words.

- The context of a parable is vitally important

We must keep in mind the context of a parable. Who is the parable intended for? What is being taught? What is the primary purpose of the parable?.

A parable makes facts interesting

The facts, even those found in the Scripture, may seem cold, or uninteresting, at times.

But, when you explain those facts with a parable, they come to life. It makes it real.

#### WHY DID JESUS SPEAK IN PARABLES ?

His disciples asked him why he spoke in parables. Mark records his response. He said, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables" (Mk.4:11).

- He spoke in parables in order to CONCEAL truth

Many had heard and rejected what Jesus said (vv. 11b,13,15). Since they had refused to listen, Jesus spoke in a way where they could not understand. We need to understand the importance of listening when God speaks. He does not waste words. When He speaks, He has something to say.

- He spoke in parables in order to REVEAL truth

Those who had heard Jesus' words and believed could understand the parables (v.11a). The truths of the parables can be understood by believers because they have the Holy Spirit to give them discernment. They see what the unbeliever doesn't.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER 13:3-9

Jesus gives the parable in verses 3-9, and interprets it in verses 18-23.

#### THE SOWER

*Mt 13:3 ....Behold, a sower went forth to sow;*

Everyone understood what a sower was. The sower would carry a bag of seed, walk in a straight line across the field, broadcasting the seed as he went.

#### THE SEED AND THE SOIL

*Mt 13:4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:*

The fields of that day were scattered throughout the land. Through these fields were paths that they used to travel. These paths were narrow, perhaps only 3 or 4 feet wide. The ground on these paths would become hard as a rock because of the traffic.

Of course, as the sower sows his seed, some of them would fall on these paths. Since the soil is so hard, the seed just lays there, it cannot penetrate the soil.

The birds find this easy meal and consume the seeds that have fallen on these paths. Birds are the enemy of the farmer. They can ruin a crop quickly.

We'll look into the spiritual significance of this in verse 19.

*Mt 13:5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:*

Some of the sower's seed fell on stony ground. This isn't talking about a bunch of rocks in the field. The farmer would go through his field and remove all those rocks. This is speaking of a sheet of bedrock that is common in that area. These sheets of bedrock would run parallel with the surface of the ground. The wind would blow a thin layer of soil on top of this bedrock. There would be very little soil there, but it was enough to where some of the seed would stick when it fell.

*Mt 13:6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.*

There was enough soil for the seed to germinate and shoot upwards, but there was not enough for roots to form. When the sun came up, the plant was scorched and withered away because it had no roots to sink down and get moisture.

We'll look into the spiritual significance of this in verses 20 & 21.

*Mt 13:7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:*

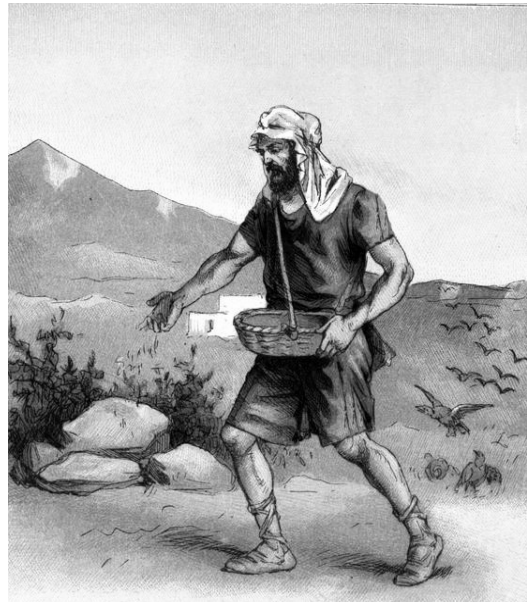
The field had been cleared. However, there were spots where there were unseen roots and seeds of thorny bushes and weeds left behind. Some of the sower's seed fell in these areas. Of course, weeds and thorns grow quickly, so they outgrew the sprouts from the good seed. The sprouts from the good seed could not grow because the weeds blocked the sunlight. Also, they were choked out because the weeds consumed the nutrients the good sprouts needed.

We'll look into the spiritual significance of this in verse 22.

*Mt 13:8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.*

Some of the seed fell on good ground. The soil is called "good" because it has been prepared to receive seed. This soil was no different than the other soil. The only difference, it had been cultivated, it was open, it was receptive to the seed. It was deep, it was soft, it was open to the seed.

This seed brings about fruit. Notice, this soil is the only one that brings forth fruit.



We'll look into the spiritual significance of this in verse 23.

*Mt 13:9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Only believers could hear Jesus' message. The Holy Spirit opens the Word to believers. An unbeliever does not have the Holy Spirit, so they cannot understand. What Jesus said was not to entertain or amuse, it was meant to change their lives. Jesus was dealing eternal affairs, life and death, heaven and hell.

This answers the question about how so many can hear the Word, and be untouched. There is no effect unless the Holy Spirit touches the heart of the hearer.

*Mt 13:10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?*

His disciples did not understand the reason for his parables. He had used illustrations and word pictures before, but he had never given a parable.

*Mt 13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.*

Jesus didn't explain the parable to the multitudes. Many of the unbelievers had rejected Jesus' words. If they wouldn't hear, Jesus would speak in a way where they couldn't hear. He explained this to his disciples in verse 15. He said, "*their eyes have they closed*". The reason he stopped speaking to the multitudes was because they refused to listen. They had closed their eyes and ears. They had rejected his word, so they would suffer the consequences.

*Mt 13:12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*

Those who had received the Word would be given more light. Those who had rejected the Word would have what little they heard taken away. How many have heard the Spirit speak, began to be convicted, but resisted the Spirit's urging? In time, the conviction, and the concern they had felt disappeared.

*Mt 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.*

They saw and heard, but did not understand.

*Mt 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:*

None of this surprised Jesus. It had been prophesied by Isaiah (Isa. 6:9-10). What could be worse than seeing the Son of God, yet not discerning who he was? What could be worse than hearing the Son of God preach the Word of God, and miss it entirely?

*Mt 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*

Their heart is "*waxed gross*" means, to be thick, or calloused. It actually means, to be stupid. They had become hard of hearing. They had closed their eyes. This is the key. It was their fault.

They had closed their eyes because they did not want to see. Anytime, anyone rejects the Word of God they will suffer greatly. No one turns away from God and gets away with it.

Why would they do such a thing? Jesus tells us in this verse. They did not want to be converted. Getting converted meant they could no longer live as they pleased. Getting converted meant they had to admit their sinful condition. They refused to do that.

The Lord had spoken to these people. But, as the light began to shine on their sin, they quickly rejected it. They would not accept the fact that they were sinners, or that they deserved judgment. So many do the same today. As soon as the Holy Spirit begins to speak to them, they resist His work, and turn back to their sin.

The saddest part of this verse is the fact that the Lord was willing to "*heal them*", had they only listened. The answer to all our problems, is always the Word of God.

*Mt 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*

As Jesus would tell Peter, "*blessed art thou*". Peter had not received his information through "*flesh and blood*", but from the "*Father which is in heaven*" (Mt. 16:17).

We who see and hear have truly been blessed. What could be worse than to not know what the Word of God is saying? The Word has the answer to every question we have. It is the solution to every problem. It

is our comfort when we are hurting, our strength when we are weary, our courage when we are afraid, and our lamp when we need direction. How awful it would be to have the bible, and not be able to get from it the help it provides.

*Mt 13:17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*

Many Old Testament saints desired to see, and hear the things these disciples did. They did not see the mysteries of the kingdom.

JESUS EXPLAINS THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER 13:18-23

HE EXPLAINS THE SOWER v. 18

*Mt 13:18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.*

Jesus gave the spiritual meaning of this parable. Who was the sower? Most likely, it was referring to Jesus. In another parable later in this chapter, Jesus said the sower is the "Son of man" (v. 37). We would be safe to assume the sower is the same in both parables.

No matter what, the sower certainly refers to someone who is sowing the seed of the Word of God. That could refer to Jesus himself, and it can refer to the believers who follow him. When we share the Word, we are sowing.

The sower has a desire for a harvest. He labors hard that he might see his desire become a reality. That's the only reason he went to his field. That was his intent when he left his house. We should realize, witnessing will not happen accidentally. We must do it on purpose. We must determine to be a sower.

HE EXPLAINS THE SEED v. 19

The sower sows seed. The life is in the seed. Jesus said, when someone "*heareth the word of the kingdom*", so we know the seed is the Word of God. Also, Luke tells us the seed is the Word of God (Lk.8:11). Peter tells us we are born again by the "incorruptible" Word of God (1 Pet.1:23). The Lord invites people to leave the world of darkness and enter the kingdom of light.

The "*word of the kingdom*" is the message that tells someone how they can get into the kingdom. The Word is like seed, it has life within itself. When the seed finds good ground, life bursts forth. So, it is with the Word of God.

The seed is the only means of life in the agriculture world. Without seed, we would have no harvest. So it is in the spiritual world. Without the Word of God, there is no life.

HE EXPLAINS THE SOIL vv. 19-23

Jesus mentioned four different types of soil. Actually, there was only one type of soil. After all, dirt is dirt. The difference between the four soils was how each had been prepared. It's the condition of the soil that makes the difference.

We will talk to people with all types of backgrounds. Some have been raised in church, some have never gone to church, some have been abused, some have had a life of ease, and some have been taught to sin since their birth.

All the soils could have received the seed, had it simply allowed itself to be prepared. I am glad the gospel is open to whosoever will (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13; Rev. 22:17).

If there is no fruit, it is not the fault of the sower, or the seed. The problem lies with the soil. As long as the sower sows the true seed, he has done all that can be done. This certainly does not mean we can live as we please and still expect God to use us. It does mean He can use us in spite of our limitations.

THE FIRST SOIL, THE PERSON WITH THE STUBBORN HEART v. 19 (cf. v.4)

*Mt 13:19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*

This is the person who's heart is hard. They stubbornly reject the Word.

As described in verse 4, some of the seed fell on the hard paths. The soil was so hard the seed could not penetrate it. This speaks of the person who will not listen to the Word. You talk to some people and it's like talking to a brick wall. You can tell, it isn't sinking in.

This is the hardhearted person who has no interest in the things of God. Like the hard ground, they have never allowed their hearts to be softened by the Spirit of God.

Then cometh "*the wicked one*". We know this is the devil. He swoops in like a bird and devours the seed. Jesus said in verse 4, the birds come and devour the seed. If any of the Word touches their heart, the devil is quick to spring to action. He reminds them of all the "fun" they are having in the world. He whispers in their ear and tells them the Christian life is for losers. He may simply tell them to wait, and get saved later.

THE SECOND SOIL, THE PERSON WITH THE SHALLOW HEART v. 20-21 (cf. vv.5-6)

*Mt 13:20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;*

This is the person who makes a false profession.

The large bedrock that ran near the surface of the ground made the soil shallow. The seed had enough soil to germinate, but not enough to send down roots.

This person hears the Word, gets excited, and without much thought, "makes a decision". They are the kind who looks at Christianity as the thing that will make them happy. Maybe they have been facing some real problems, and they see salvation as a way to get some relief. They don't give their decision any real thought. They never counted the cost. They didn't realize, there is a price to pay by being a real Christian.

This speaks of the person who hears the word and quickly makes a profession of faith. But, the profession is false. This is the person hears about the joy that is found in Jesus, and quickly grabs this "fix all" religion. But, there was no conviction, there was no repentance, and there was no real conversion.

If this type of person lives today, how many more would have lived in Jesus' day? Many saw him heal the sick, raise the dead, and feed the multitude. As wonderful as his miracles were, they caused many people to want what they could get out of him. To them, he was a free meal ticket. Jesus addressed these people in the book of John (Jn.6:26).

*Mt 13:21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*

Since all the nutrients from the soil was devoted to springing upward, so it grew upward quickly. However, since it could not sink down deeply to obtain moisture and nutrients, it died quickly.

This type of person may look genuine to begin with. Remember, the sprout shots up quickly. This is the person who shows a great deal of emotion when they make their profession of faith.

But, once this person faces some of the difficulties of the Christian life, they show their true colors. When someone makes fun of them for going to church, when they are mistreated by their old friends, or they face a problem they weren't expecting, they quit.

Persecution will do two things, it will strengthen the true believer, but it will also reveal the false believer. This parable lets us know all professions are not genuine. At times, the ones who seem to be so real, are the ones that are false.

THE THIRD SOIL, THE PERSON WITH THE SATURATED HEART v. 22 (cf. v.7)

*Mt 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

This person is the one who has a heart saturated with a love for the world. They are not interested in the Word. The thorns and weeds of worldliness consumes them. This may be the person who loves to party, or the business man who strives for success, or the teenager that longs to be popular. They have so much in their lives, they don't have time for God.

The weeds and thorn bushes consume the nutrients in the soil. The soil, any soil, has a limited amount of nutrients. There is not enough for the thorn bushes, and the good seed. In like fashion, the human heart is limited. There is only so much time, and so much room in any life. We cannot live for the Lord and the world at the same time. Jesus said we cannot serve God and mammon (Mt. 6:24).

We must not forget, weeds grow naturally in any soil. Weeds will grow in places you would never dream possible. The lost person feels at home in the world. Sin and worldliness comes naturally to them.

The sad thing is, weeds of the world can also grow in the heart of a believer. Our flesh will always desire the things of the world. However, if you are a believer, there will also be a fervent desire to please the Lord.

THE FOURTH SOIL, THE PERSON WITH THE SOFT HEART v. 23 (cf. v.7)

*Mt 13:23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

Some of the seed fell into good ground that was ready to receive it. This speaks of the person who listens to the Word, accepts its message, and turns to the Lord for salvation.

This is the only soil that brought forth fruit. Fruit is the proof of real salvation. It isn't leaves, or vines, it is fruit.

Some have used this parable in an attempt to teach that we can lose our salvation. This is totally unbiblical. Those who did not bear fruit were never saved. Again, fruit, and only fruit, is the proof.

The harvest was a good harvest. The least amount of fruit was thirty-fold. Some produced thirty, some sixty, and some one hundred.

One out of four who heard the Word, accepted it. This certainly does not mean that one out of every four people we witness to will get saved. It is simply saying, many who hear, will reject it. But, thank the Lord, there are some who will hear.

We should not be discouraged if people don't accept the Lord every time we witness. The soil of their heart simply was not ready to receive it. God can still soften their heart. Very few people accept the Lord the first time they hear the Word.

So, what are we to do? We are to keep sowing. Keep praying, keep witnessing, keep handing out tracts, and keep trusting God to touch their hearts.

#### THOUGHTS TO PONDER ABOUT THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

- It isn't the sower

It isn't the talent or ability of the sower that brings fruit. The seed brings fruit. Anyone can throw out seed. An experienced farmer, or a five year old boy, can sow seed. I am not implying we can live a half hearted Christian life and still be used of the Lord. Certainly, the dedicated Christian will be used greater than the worldly Christian.

If you feel like you aren't equipped to witness, simply tell others what has happened to you. Sow your seed. But, be sure to study the Word and learn how to witness in a more productive manner.

- We should witness a lot

Anyone knows, the more seed you sow, the greater the harvest. Go tell everyone.

- Most will not listen

Only one out of four received the Word. We must not let that get us discouraged. We were not told to win the world. We were told to sow and let the Lord take care of the harvest.

We should not force people to pray

We should trust the seed. We can depend on the Lord to touch the hearts of those we speak to. I have seen so many, well meaning Christians, almost force people to pray the sinner's prayer. The terrible fact is, many of them believe they really got saved, when they are still heading towards hell.

- Some will hear and believe

There will be some who really get saved. What a joy it is to be able to lead someone into the family.

- Don't be discouraged

One of the primary reasons Jesus gave this parable was to encourage his disciples. He told us there will be times they won't listen when we witness.

- We should keep on sowing

No matter what the result, we must keep on sowing. Who knows, the next one you speak to may be the one who God has made ready. Their hearts may be made tender even while you are talking to them.

The Jews actually had a method of farming where they would sow the seed first, and then they would plow the soil. This made certain the seed would go into the soil. So, keep sowing and trust God soften their hearts later if they are hard now.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND TARES 13:24-30

Jesus gives the second parable in this chapter. He stated the parable in verses 24-30, and explained it in verses 37-43.

In this parable, the sower is the Son of man. The field is the world. The good seed is the children of the kingdom, the enemy is the devil, the tares are the children of the devil, the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.

*Mt 13:24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:*

Once again, Jesus gives a parable about farming to describe the condition of the kingdom of heaven. Remember, the kingdom of heaven deals with how God rules over the earth at our present time. As we have mentioned before, the kingdom of heaven represents "professing" believers. This means, some are genuine, but some are false. Some are really saved, and some are lost.

Jesus talked about a man who sowed good seed in his field. He will explain this in verse 37.

*Mt 13:25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.*

Jesus will explain this in verse 37-39.

While the laborers slept, an enemy came and "sowed tares among the wheat". This was not uncommon during Jesus' day. One of the best ways to get to your enemy would be to ruin his crop. His crop was his livelihood. If he had no harvest, he and his family would go hungry. The Roman government actually established a law to deal with those who would do such a thing.

This "tare" most most likely was a "darnel". A darnel was a weed that was common in ancient Israel. It looked just like wheat until the head, or fruit, of the wheat came forth.

*Mt 13:26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.*

When the wheat grew, so did the tares. Once the head of the wheat came forth, the difference between the wheat and the tares became obvious.

*Mt 13:27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?*

The servants were shocked to find the tares among the wheat. They knew their boss, they knew his desire for a good harvest. They knew he would sow only the best of seed so they were shocked to see the tares. God does not work contrary to His nature, or His Word.

*Mt 13:28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?*

The servants suggested removing the tares from the field. The first response was to get rid of the tares so the wheat could grow without hindrance.

Jesus explains this in verse 39.

*Mt 13:29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.*

If they tried to pull up the tares, they would pull up some wheat also. The two looked so much alike, no one could tell the difference. We cannot determine who is real, and who is false. We do not know the hearts of people.

*Mt 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*

The wheat would be easy to recognize when it reached full maturity. Then, the workers could go in and separate the tares from the wheat.

We can see the mercy of God in this parable. The only reason judgment is withheld on the tares, is because of the wheat. The children of the wicked one ought to be thankful for the children of the kingdom. If it were not for the godly, the ungodly would be judged quickly. The people of God are the salt of the earth (Mt. 5:13). Salt preserves. Sodom was destroyed because of it's sin, but it was also destroyed because there were not enough godly people (Gen. 18:16-33).

Jesus will explain this in verses 39-42.

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED 13:31-32

*Mt 13:31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:*

Jesus used another parable about a farmer. But, notice the difference. This farmer was not in his field sowing seeds by the handful. This farmer sowed one seed.



This seed was not your ordinary seed, there was something special about this seed. It only takes one seed to accomplish what the farmer desires. This seed grew into something gigantic.

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed sown in a field. Mustard had many purposes. It was a valuable crop. The kingdom of believers are to effect this world for the good. Are you doing your part to make this world a better place? We are not here to change the entire world, but the Lord can use us to change our part of the world.

*Mt 13:32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*

This parable reveals how even though the kingdom will have a small beginning, it will grow to something gigantic.

Great things can come from small beginnings. Every piece of music ever written, from chopsticks to Bach, comes from eight simple notes. Every piece of literature, from Jack and Jill to Shakespeare, comes from twenty six letters, every mathematical equation comes from ten numbers.

Jesus said the mustard seed was the "*least*", or smallest, of all seeds. Some have tried to discredit Jesus' words in this verse. They say there are seeds that are smaller than the mustard seed. For instance, the wild orchid seed is much smaller than the mustard seed.

This is a vitally important matter. If Jesus was mistaken about the mustard seed, that means, he was wrong. If he was wrong, that means, he was not God.

However, Jesus was not talking about *wild* seeds or plants. The word "*seed*" that Jesus used in this parable is the type of seed that is used in a garden. It is the type of seed that is planted on purpose, with a harvest in mind. The mustard seed *is* the smallest of any seed that is used for a harvest. So, Jesus was correct in saying the mustard seed is the smallest.

Jesus said the mustard seed starts small, but when it is grown, it becomes a tree. Certainly he did not mean the mustard plant would be as large as an oak tree. However, in Palestine, the mustard plant has been known to grow as high as 25 feet high. Imagine, from a seed so small it is difficult to pick up, comes a tree 25 feet high.

So, Jesus was telling the truth about his kingdom. It did start small. In fact, his kingdom started in a manger. This king was raised in a carpenter's home. He led a lowly life.

His ministry started with eleven men. When Jesus ascended, there were only 120 in the upper room. The disciples were all afraid, confused, and fleshly.

Yet, from that small beginning, billions have come. By the time Paul died, only about forty years after Jesus gave this parable, the gospel message had spread to the ends of the known world. What a thought!

This seed was so small had little chance to live. It was truly a speck against the world. There was every reason in the world for it to not survive.

So it is with the kingdom of God, and the gospel message. The devil has fought this kingdom from it's beginning. Yet, like the mustard seed, his kingdom thrives. Peter preached one message and 3,000 souls were saved (Acts 2:41). Later, 5,000 were saved (Acts 4:4). Even though the entire world has not yet heard, the gospel has spread across this world like a wildfire.

How can anything so small, with so much opposition, have any hope of survival? The odds against it are unbelievable. It has survived because the God of heaven has protected it. When speaking of his church, Jesus said, "*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" (Mat.16:18).

The mustard seed became a tree that branched out. This reminds us how God is the ruler of the entire earth. All people do not acknowledge Him, but He is Lord none the less.

Jesus said the mustard seed produces a plant so large, the birds come and make their nests in it. The word "lodge" means to remain, or to live. So, the birds actually build their nests in this plant. This speaks of the influence the kingdom will have on this world. The effects of the kingdom will branch out across the world, and influence everyone under it's branches.

Look across this world and you will see the effects of God's kingdom. Christianity has had a tremendous effect on the world. Our calendar is based on the birth of Christ. The bible is still the number one seller. A great deal of the world has at least a portion of the bible in their language. I dare say America would not even exist if it were not for Christianity. Compare America to the nations who never heard about Jesus and you will notice a vast difference. The nations that have embraced Christianity have better morals, and are more advanced in every aspect of life.

The birds are not a part of the tree, but they benefit from it. The birds live in the tree because it provides safety, shelter, and seed. The mustard tree produces seed that the birds can eat. They don't even have to leave the tree. In like fashion, lost people around the world are enjoying the benefits of living in the branches of God's blessings.

Christianity has had a positive effect on any land that embraces it. America is what she is, because of the effects of Christianity. Until this country began to ignore the principles of scripture, she was the greatest nation ever to exist, other than Israel.

The moral principles of Christianity, dignity of life, judicial system, education, free enterprise, and the dignity for women, all are benefits that have been instilled by Christianity.

The birds lodging in the plant reminds us how there are many false professors in the kingdom. Remember, this kingdom includes those who profess to be saved, which includes those who are genuine, and those who are false. The more the kingdom grows, the easier it is for those who are not real to slip in. Church growth is wonderful. But, it can also provide a place for those who are not genuine. As the birds devour the seeds on the mustard plant, these false professors have the potential of harming the kingdom.

Jesus' words about the small beginning meant more to the disciples than we can ever imagine. They would eventually see their leader mistreated, abused, and crucified. They would see multitudes turn their backs on Jesus. This parable taught them how the kingdom was supposed to start small.

Even though this parable deals with the kingdom, I cannot help but apply its truth to individuals. God uses small things. He works through people who see how small they are. God chose the weak things of this world to work through (1 Cor. 1:27). God uses ordinary people. He uses men who have a speech impediment, like Moses, to bring millions of people out of captivity. He uses little shepherd boys, like David, to defeat giants. He uses men like Job to give hope to hundreds of millions of suffering people. He uses men like Ezra to turn a nation back to God.

He uses ordinary men like Evan Roberts, D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, R. A. Torrey, C. H. Spurgeon, and Oliver Greene. He uses ordinary women like Ruth, Ester, Elisabeth, Mary and Priscilla. Ordinary people who had learned they had a very big God.

The sooner we realize we are nothing, the sooner God will be able to use us.

2 Co 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Nothing is worse than pride (Le 26:19; Pr 16:18; Pr 11:2; Pr 29:23; 1 Co 10:12; Jam. 4:6; 1 Pe 5:5-6; 1 Jn. 2:16).

You may feel like you are a nothing. But, if you will give all of your nothing to God, there is no telling what He might do.

So, this parable teaches us how the kingdom will start small but grow into something that will influence the entire world. It teaches that God will protect His people in spite of false doctrine, and evil influence. It teaches the ungodly will benefit from the presence of the godly. It teaches that God can use small things to accomplish great things.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN 13:13:33

*Mt 13:33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

Jesus likens the kingdom to a woman putting a piece of leaven into a lump of dough. Leaven was like yeast, it caused bread to rise. When a lady made bread, she always took a small piece of dough from the loaf she was making, and laid it aside. She would put this small piece in the next loaf when she made bread. This piece is sometimes called a starter. The leaven in this small piece would permeate the new loaf and cause it to rise.

There has been much ink spilled in an attempt to explain this parable. Since Jesus did not explain it, we have to seek direction from the Holy Spirit to find its meaning.

Some believe the leaven is the good influence of the gospel that spreads throughout the world. Some believe the leaven speaks of evil that spreads through the kingdom.

I personally believe the leaven speaks of the ungodly influence that will spread throughout the kingdom.

I believe this for the following reasons.

- For the most part, leaven is spoken of in a negative sense in the bible

Leaven is used to illustrate something evil, or sinful. It is a picture of sin, false doctrine, hypocrisy, and wickedness (Mt. 16:6; Mk.8:14; Lk.12:1; 1 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 5:7-10).

There is one exception. In Leviticus, God told His people to offer sacrifices that included leaven (Lev. 23:17).

- The bible does not teach that the church will spread godliness and make the world good

In fact, the opposite is true. The world will continue to get worse in spite of the church's godly influence (Mt. 24:36-38; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim.3:13).

I believe Jesus is warning his disciples, and us, about the danger of false doctrine. He had already warned them about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Mt. 16:6).

He warned them about the legalists. He warns us about the liberals.

Unfortunately, we are seeing the leaven spreading today.

We see it in the form of false doctrine. The devil loves to sow discord by introducing confusion in a church.

We see it in the form of easy believism. It has become common, even among those who call themselves fundamental, to simply lead a lost person in a prayer. There is no need for conviction, no repentance, and no change in their lives. They say a person accepts Jesus as Savior now, and will make him Lord later.

We see it in the form of worldliness. Many modern churches have allowed worldliness to creep in. It is made evident by the way they talk, the way they dress, and their attitude towards sin. There is a relaxed view towards sin. What used to be sin, they consider acceptable.

We see it in the form of "contemporary worship". We are seeing such a move in this direction. Those who used to hold to old fashion convictions are giving into this dangerous movement. Christians who once held to godly standards have allowed themselves to be swallowed up by this movement.

We are living in the day of compromise and tolerance. We are told to love. But, the type of love that is espoused today, is not biblical love. The bible does not teach a love that compromises with sin.

There is one fact about leaven that we dare not forget. Once it is placed in the dough, it spreads, it permeates the entire loaf. And, once it is in, it will not be removed.

I know of no church, having allowed compromise to get in, that has turned back to the old fashion way of godly standards. I know many who have given in, but none, not one, who has ever recovered from the death grip of compromise.

As the parable of the tares taught us, there will always be godliness and ungodliness in the world. But we dare not allow the ungodliness to infiltrate our personal lives, or our churches. We should, at all costs, avoid the evil influence of compromise and worldliness. Once we allow it in our lives, our families, or our churches, there is no going back.

The devil cannot take our salvation, but he certainly can take control of our lives, if we allow it.

Leaven works strongly. It changes the nature of the dough. The devil would love to control us in such a fashion to where there is no indication that we are even saved.

Leaven works silently. It is working at times when we don't recognize it. There are times when we do not even realize how much the devil is controlling us.

Leaven works completely. The devil wants full control of every believer. He cannot get your soul, so he will settle for your life.

This woman mixed the leaven in "three measures of meal". That is an extremely large lump. A measure was equal to twelve dry quarts. So, three measures would have been equal to nine gallons. But, it seems as though it was common to bake this much bread (Gen.18:6; Judges 6:19; 1 Sam. 1:24).

As the mustard plant started from a small seed, this large loaf was filled from a small piece of leaven.

*Mt 13:34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:*

As we have already discussed, Jesus spoke in parables that those who had refused to listen when he spoke clearly (13:11-16). On this occasion, and probably while he was in Galilee, Jesus spoke only in parables.

*Mt 13:35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.*

The things Jesus said, and the things he did, were fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The psalmist spoke of these things (Ps.78:2-3).

## JESUS EXPLAINED THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND THE TARES 13:36-43

*Mt 13:36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.*

Jesus sent the multitudes away, and went into a house. So, the disciples were the only ones who heard the explanation to the parable.

Notice, Jesus did not explain the parable until he sent the multitudes away. Once again, we see how these truths were for those who would receive it. Those who rejected the truth could not understand the parables. Jesus had explained the reason in verse 15. Those who had closed their ears to the truth so God fixed it to where they couldn't hear.

The disciples asked Jesus to explain the parable. Even though these parables were for the believers, they still needed divine insight to understand them. The truths of God are revealed to us by the Holy Spirit.

*Mt 13:37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;*

In verse 24, Jesus told us a sower sowed good seed in his field. He says here, the sower was the "son of man". Of course, this is speaking of Jesus (Lk. 22:69, and verse 41 of this chapter).

The sower sowed in "his" field. He owned the field. This world belongs to God. He owns it all (Ps. 50:10).

It would do us well to note how parables can be different. In the parable of the sower, the seed represented the Word of God. In this parable, seed represents people.

*Mt 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;*

Some say this parable deals with the church. But, Jesus plainly said, the field is the "world".

Some have used these verses in an attempt to discourage church discipline. When Jesus said to not pluck up the tares he was not saying we should tolerate sin in the church. We must remember the field is the world, not the church. The bible teaches church discipline. There are times when a member of a church should be removed from the church roll. Church discipline is dealing with church members who refuse to repent of their open sin. There are times when it becomes necessary to deal with a person in this manner.

This is done in order to cleanse the church and keep it pure.

Paul told the church of Corinth to put a person out of the church In (1 Co 5:1-7). Paul said to purge out the old leaven (1 Co 5:7). In that verse, "purge", means to cleanse. Church discipline may be required in cases of those who cause division in the church. Paul mentions this in Ro 16:17. Other scripture that deal with church discipline are Mt 18:17; 1 Co 5:9; Eph 5:11; 2 Ti 3:5, and Tit 3:10.

The act of church discipline is done in order to convict the one who is in sin, and get them to repent. It is not done just to get rid of the guilty person. When the guilty person repents we should accept them back (2 Co. 2:6-8; Gal. 6:1).

The seed he sowed was "good" seed. In this case, the good seed is "the children of the kingdom", or those who are true believers. The tares are the "children of the wicked one", or those who profess to be saved, but aren't (Jn. 8:44).

There are only two types of "children". You are either a child of the kingdom, or a child of the wicked one.

The servants suggested removing the tares from the field back in verse 28.

The first response is to get rid of the tares so the wheat can grow without hindrance. I'm afraid many Christians have this same idea. We dream of a land with no sinners, and no sin. This sounds wonderful but that is not God's will for this present time. When we isolate ourselves totally from the world we cut ourselves off from any opportunity to win them to Christ. We certainly should not be like the world, or participate with their sin, but we can not cut ourselves totally off from the world. We should be in the world, but not of the world.

Not only did the enemy sow the tares, but the owner sowed the good seed. God has placed us where He wants us. Your job, school, neighborhood, or family may not be very difficult, but you must consider the possibility that God put you there that you might be a light.

*Mt 13:39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.*

The enemy who sowed the tares was the devil. This tells us the devil plants his people where he wants them.

Just as the tares hinder the growth of the wheat, the devil sows his children in an attempt to hinder the children of the kingdom. You may wonder why that "person" is at work, or on your street, or maybe even in your family. Have you ever considered the devil may have put them in your life in an attempt to harass you? However, as we saw in verse 38, just as the enemy sowed bad seed, the owner sowed good seed. The devil wants that person to irritate you, but your God has placed you there to be a godly influence on them.

Notice how Jesus worded the devil's activity. In verse 25, Jesus said the enemy sowed the tares, "*and went his way*". That is exactly what the devil does.

He sows havoc, and moves on to cause more trouble elsewhere. He never rests. His response to the Lord's question makes it clear, he said "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it" (Job 1:7). He is still on the move.

Jesus said in verse 25, the laborers were sleeping. This was not really wrong. They had labored all day, so they needed rest. But, this does speak of the spiritual condition of those living during the day Jesus was speaking about. The spirit of slumber has spread across this world like a plague. Oh, how we need the Holy Spirit to wake us up.

The "*end of the world*" speaks of the end of the age. It is the time when God deals with sin and sinners. This is accomplished because God says it is time. God will not move too soon. All through the bible, we see the mercy and patience of God.

The "*reapers*" are the angels. God has used His angels to minister to His children (Heb. 1:14). He has also used angel to execute judgment (Gen. 18:12-13; 2 Kgs. 19:35). He will use them again.

*Mt 13:40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.*

The tares will be gathered and thrown into the fire. There is no doubt as to what this fire refers to, it is the fire of an eternal hell (cf. v. 42).

*Mt 13:41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;*

Notice how Jesus identifies the "*Son of man*" here. It is none other than Jesus himself. Under the instructions of the Lord, the angels will gather the unbelievers.

Those who offended and did iniquity are gathered "*out of his kingdom*" (cf. Mt.8:12). As we have mentioned, the kingdom deals with all those who profess to be saved. All professors, are not possessors.

*Mt 13:42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

Jesus will say, "*depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*" (Mt. 25:41). This is the final home of the unsaved. Whether they be the vile, or the religious. Whether they lived in open sin, or lived a moral life and sat on a church pew every week. The tares will cast into the furnace.

*Mt 13:43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Those who have been made righteous by the heavenly Father will shine forth as the sun. The taint of sin restricts the glory that indwells the saint. In that day, all that will be gone. Thank the Lord, there is coming a day when we will be delivered from these sin cursed bodies.

We must remember this parable, and this book, is written primarily to the Jews. Jesus was telling the Jews there will eventually be a kingdom. At the end of the Tribulation period, Jesus will return to this earth. He will deal with those who are lost. Then, he will deal with those who have gotten saved during the Tribulation period. The children of the kingdom will finally inherit their kingdom. For a thousand years, Jesus will rule and reign on earth (2 Sam. 7:10-13; Micah 4:2-4; Isa.32:18; Zech. 12:10-14; Mt. 24:31; Lk. 1:32-33; Rev. 20:2-7).

There is a purpose for this parable. Those who can hear, need to listen. The believers should listen because there are millions around us who are heading towards hell. The unbeliever who may be blessed enough to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit should listen in order to escape this horrible place.

THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE 13:44

*Mt 13:44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*

In this parable, the treasure is Israel. The man who found the treasure is Jesus. The field is the world.

Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a man who found a treasure in a field. Finding treasure buried in a field would not have been uncommon in Jesus' day. There were no banks, so they had no safe place to keep their valuables. It was common to bury them in a field, and mark the spot in a way that only they would recognize. We are told about a man in Matthew 25 who buried his talent. It was a common practice.

It's important to remember, Palestine was a land of war. There would be times when the residents would be attacked. So, they would bury their valuables in case of an attack. Or, if they were attacked unexpectedly, they would bury their valuables and flee. For whatever reason, there would be times when they would not return to claim these valuables. So, the land was literally a treasure chest of riches.

This man finds a treasure somehow. He may have been plowing, or digging, we aren't told. He hides the treasure, goes and sells everything he owns, and buys the field in order to get the treasure.

Some have suggested this man's actions were unethical. How could he take a treasure that did not belong to him? However, as we will see, this man went overboard to do the right thing.

To begin with, Jewish law stated, "If a man finds scattered fruit or money, it belongs to the finder". So, this man was within his rights, and within the law to keep this treasure.

Also, this man did not just take the treasure, and not tell anyone. He could have easily done so. Instead, he sold everything he owned and bought the entire field from it's present owner.

It is obvious that this treasure did not belong to the man who presently owned the field. If it did, he would not have sold the field and left the treasure where it was. So, the present owner had no more right to the treasure than the man who found it.

The original owner of the land (the one who put the treasure in the ground to begin with) must have died without telling anyone about the treasure. His family either inherited the field, or sold it, also without knowing about the treasure.

This man's actions tells us that he was a man of character. Had he not been an honest man, he would simply have taken the treasure when he found it. Instead, he buys the entire field in order to rightfully own the treasure.

Having dealt with the ethics of this man, let's look at the meaning of the parable. What was Jesus saying?

There are different views about the meaning of this parable. Some believe it is a picture of a lost person who discovers the treasure of salvation, and gives all he has to accept the Lord's forgiveness.

I understand some of the reasons why they believe this, but I believe it is speaking of how Jesus paid the price to purchase God's chosen people, Israel. We must remember, Matthew is writing primarily to the Jews.

This parable can be applied to every sinner who has ever been found by the Lord.

Notice these facts about this parable.

- The man finds the treasure

Jesus came seeking the sinner. He said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost" (Lk. 19:10). He said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Lk. 5:32).

God has been seeking man since He came to Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:8-9).

- The treasure was laying in the filth of the earth

Since the fall, all of mankind is stuck in the mire of sin (Ps.69:2,14; 2 Pet. 2:22).

- The man bought the entire field

The field is the world. Jesus' sacrifice paid for the sin of the entire world. I do not believe in limited atonement. The blood of Christ is sufficient to wash every sin of every person who has ever lived. God is not willing that any perish (2 Pet. 3:9).

- The man was willing to pay the price for the treasure

He sold everything he owned on order to purchase it. The God of heaven gave the best He had in order to purchase us (Jn. 3:16). I will never understand why He was willing to do such a thing. But, I sure am glad He was.

Since Jesus bought us, we belong to him (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23).

It is so easy to say "he bought the field" and move on. We, somehow, have gotten used to the fact that Jesus paid the price for our sin. We think of the cross without really seeing what it represents. We take lightly the agony he endured. God became a man. He experienced what we experience.

He suffered the pain of living in a sinful world. He was misunderstood and mistreated. Then, he was hung on a cross. Jesus took our sin upon himself when he hung on the cross. The perfect, holy, flawless, Son of God, paying for the sin of an ungodly sinner. He endured the wrath of His Father as he paid the payment for my sin. He died for us, but He also died as us. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). He took our place.

- The man makes the purchase with "joy"

In like fashion, our Savior looked past the pain of the cross and saw the joy that was before him (Heb.12:2). As far as Israel, he saw the day she would be restored, he saw the kingdom, he saw her submitted to Him (Isa. 49:13; 52:1-3; 65:18-19).

As far as the church, He saw her in her glory, holy and pure, as she will be presented as a bride adorned for her husband (Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 21:2).

#### THE PARABLE OF THE PEARL 13:45

*Mt 13:45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:*

In this parable, the merchant man is Jesus and the goodly pearl is the church.

Jesus gave these two parables that are very similar. I believe, the parable of the hidden treasure speaks of Israel and this parable speaks of the church. God knew Israel would reject His Son. He knew He would set Israel aside, He knew He would establish the church. These parables tell us about both, Israel and the church.

This parable speaks of a merchant man who is seeking for pearls. A pearl was extremely valuable in Jesus' day. They were the most valuable gem at the time. The pearl was viewed then much like diamonds are in our day. Those who were extremely rich, would flaunt their riches by wearing pearls.

One of the reasons for their cost was because of the way they were harvested. They did not have diving equipment as we do today. In order to reach the depths necessary, they would tie rocks on themselves and jump in the water. Many died attempting to get pearls.

Even though a pearl was valuable during the days of Jesus, the Jews did not see their value.

The Jews could not grasp the fact that God would open the way to the Gentiles. For the most part, the Jews still do not understand that fact. The type of merchant man Jesus spoke about was one who traveled great distances in search of his goods.

The word "seeking" in this verse implies leaving one place and going to another. How true is that of our dear Savior?

*Mt 13:46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

This man finds a pearl so magnificent, it is like no other pearl he has ever seen. It is so amazing, he sold everything he owned that he might buy it.

As in the parable of the hidden treasure, this man was willing to sell all he had to buy the pearl. I believe this parable is a picture of what was coming. Israel was going to reject their Messiah. God was going to set Israel aside, and turn to the Gentiles (Isa.49:6; Rom.11:25; Mt.15:13-18). The church was going to be established Mt.16:18).

The pearl is a perfect picture of the church, the bride of Christ. I say that for the following reasons.

- A pearl is costly

This pearl cost Jesus his life (Eph. 5:25-27)

- A pearl is a product of suffering

A pearl is formed when some foreign object gets in the oyster and causes an irritation.

- A pearl starts from something worthless

The pearl starts from the wastes on the floor of the sea. Something like a piece of sand, or bone fragments from a dead fish finds it's way into the shell of the oyster.

- A pearl grows slowly

It can take up to 3 years for a pearl to be formed. God has been working on His church for around 2,000 years.

- A pearl is one part

A pearl cannot be cut without ruining its value and beauty.

Like the pearl, the church is one. Paul said the body of Christ is one (1 Cor. 12:12-13). The body has many members, but it is still one body. So it is with the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:27; Eph. 4:4-6).

When the body of Christ is divided, it loses its value, its beauty, and its usefulness.

- The irritant is transformed into something beautiful and valuable

From the grain of sand, comes a precious pearl. God is working on his church. The day will come when she will be something beautiful. He will present His church, the bride of Christ, to His Son. At that time, she will be glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, she will be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:27).

THE PARABLE OF THE NET 13:46-50

*Mt 13:47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:*

Matthew is the only gospel writer who records the parable of the net.

Now Jesus was dealing with the end result of the kingdom. The godly will be gathered into the kingdom, and the ungodly will be cast into hell. The parable of the wheat and tares dealt with the godly and ungodly. However, in that parable, the emphasis was on how the godly and ungodly would exist together. In this parable, the emphasis is on how the godly and ungodly will be separated.

It is vitally important to remember that Matthew is speaking primarily to Jews. We must be careful to not see in these words the truths about the church that were later given to Paul. This speaks of the events that will take place at the end of the Tribulation Period, and at the beginning of the kingdom (Mt. 24:1-31 and Rev. 6-19).

We should recognize the seriousness of this life. It isn't just today that we should not be concerned about. We will spend eternity, either in the joy of heaven, or the torment of hell.

This parable deals with judgment. The summary is found in verse 50. Jesus spoke often about hell. Some have said he spoke more about hell than he did about heaven. This is not true, but he did speak often about the judgment of hell fire.

We must remember, the kingdom of heaven deals with all those who *profess* to be saved. Some are saved, and some are not.

God is being patient with the unsaved for now. But, the time will come when His patience will run out.

In this parable, Jesus told about a net that is thrown into the sea. The word Jesus used for "net" is talking about a seine net.

A seine net was a very large net. It was so large that it could cover a half mile area. They would secure one end of the net to the shore, and the other end to a boat. The boat would make a large circle, and come back to the shore.

The top of the net would float on the surface of the water. The bottom of the net was weighted, so it would drag across the bottom of the sea. Therefore, everything within its path would be captured in the net.

*Mt 13:48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.*

The boat would come back to the shore, filling the net with fish as it went. Once the boat reached the shore, the fishermen would pull the net to shore, sit down, and separate the good from the bad. They would keep the good, and discard the bad. This task was done carefully.

The fishermen would put the good fish in a vessel that usually contained water. This way, the fish would be kept alive. They would discard the bad.

*Mt 13:49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,*

As the fishermen carefully separated the good from the bad, so will the godly and the ungodly be separated. There will be no mistakes. None of the ungodly will go to into the kingdom, and none of the godly will go to hell.

*Mt 13:50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

The godly will enjoy the splendor of the kingdom (Mt. 25:21). But, the ungodly will be cast into hell.



Hell is a place where there is "wailing and gnashing of teeth". No one can adequately describe hell. The torment is beyond the imagination.

Notice some things about this parable.

- The net is large

It is large enough to encircle everyone on earth. No one will escape.

- The net is moving

As the net was drawn slowly towards the shore, so time is slowly drawing all things to the end. Some people live as though they have plenty of time. But, the end is coming. We must prepare now, before it is too late. The devil wants you to believe you have plenty of time. Hell is full of people who thought they had more time than they did.

- For a time, the net is unnoticed

As the net is pulled towards the shore, it may bump the fish, but they don't even notice. They just wiggle a little, and are not alarmed. They are prisoners even though they think they are free. The ungodly are the same. They think they are living as they please. In reality, they are prisoners to their sin.

- The net reaches the shore

The day of reckoning will come. In mercy, God withholds His judgment for now. He is giving the ungodly a chance to repent. But, the time of His patience will end. He wants to be your Savior, but if you reject Him, He will be your judge.

Jesus warned about hell many times as he lived in this world. Those who refuse his message are sealing their own doom.

In spite of all Jesus said, the Jews still rejected him, and his message (Mt. 23:37).

Mt 13:51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

And so, Jesus comes to the conclusion of the parables in this chapter. He asked the disciple if they understand what he had said. It is one thing to hear, it is quite another to comprehend.

What good would it do if they did not understand? The greatest teacher on earth is of no value if they are not understood. Even the Word of God is useless if no one comprehends what it says. The truth must be received. It must be consumed like the food we eat.

Jesus' question should cause every teacher, and preacher to take notice. The goal of those who communicate the Word of God should not be to merely speak the truth, but to speak the truth in a way that can be understood by those who listen.

Our goal should be that those who listen to us, really hear the truth. We are not teaching the bible, we are teaching people. Therefore, we should ask the Lord to help us teach, or preach, in a manner that can be understood.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER

*Mt 13:52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.*

Jesus gives one more parable before he moves on. He talked about a householder. A householder was the head of the house. He was the one who provided what was needed for his family, and guests. He was responsible for any, and all needs of the estate. The householder had a storehouse from which he took what was needed for the moment. When a plow, or seed, or whatever, was needed, the householder went to the storehouse and got it. Jesus referred to this storehouse as a "*treasure*" because it was where the goods were kept to run the estate.

Some of the goods in the storehouse were old, and some were new. Both, the old, and the new were needed. So, the householder would bring out whichever was needed to do the job.

Jesus was explaining to his disciples how they had a storehouse to draw from. They had the Old Testament Scriptures, and they had the new truths that he had been teaching them. Both had their place, and both were needed.

Like the householder, the disciples were responsible for the distribution of the goods within that storehouse.

Jesus spoke of a "*scribe*" in this verse. The scribes began during Ezra's day. They were to study, teach, and preserve the Old Testament law.

Unfortunately, by Jesus' day, they had added so many man-made traditions, the law was almost lost in the process.

Jesus was saying his disciples were going to be like the scribes. He had instructed them about the things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven. They were supposed to hear, believe, apply, and share what he had said.

Jesus was telling his disciples that they were responsible for what they have heard. They said they understood what he had said. Hopefully, they did because they were now responsible to pass it on to others. They were to help others understand the truths that Jesus had given them.

The new truths these parables revealed were to be combined with the old truths of the Old Testament. The disciples knew a great deal about the Word of God, but, just like us, they were to be always learning more. We should never become satisfied with the level of knowledge we have about God's truth.

Here are some facts about this parable that we can apply to our lives.

- The Word of God can be trusted

The truths of the Word that have stood the test of time. The truths that are found in the Word of God, never grow old. They are as up to date as today's newspaper.

- The Word of God is a treasure house of truth

We have a treasure house of divine truth to draw from.

We should all love the Word of God. Certainly those who teach or preach should love it supremely. We should view it as it is, a treasure.

- We are all responsible for learning what the bible says

How can we help anyone if we do not know the Word ourselves? The bible condemns laziness, whether it be in the factory, the office building, or the preacher's study.

We should guard the Word of God

The devil would love to water down the truth of the Word. We should guard against compromise.

The treasure was to be given to those who needed it. The householder distributed his goods to those who had need. The truth should be given. The truth of scripture was never meant to be hoarded. We should study it, and pass it on.

Jesus' words should remind us of the importance of protecting the Word of God. I mean by that, those who teach or preach should be very careful to be biblical. Those who hear the Word should be careful to apply what they hear to their lives. And finally, those who hear are to give what they heard to others.

And so, Jesus gave this last parable in order to summarize all the parables in this chapter. In the parable about the sower (vv. 3-9) he dealt with how people would respond to his message. In the parable of the wheat and tares (vv. 24-30) he dealt with how the true and the false will live together. In the parable of the mustard seed (vv. 31-32) he dealt with how the kingdom of heaven would start small, but would grow tremendously. In the parable of the leaven (v. 33) he dealt with how evil would spread throughout the kingdom of heaven. In the parable of the treasure in a field, he dealt with Israel (v.44). In the parable of the goodly pearl, he dealt with the cost of the church (vv. 45-46). And, in the parable of the householder (v.52) Jesus warned his disciples how they were responsible for everything they had heard.

### JESUS CONTINUES HIS MINISTRY 13:53

Mt 13:53 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

Jesus moves on. The rejection continues. The time comes when God will quit speaking, and move on.

*Mt 13:54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?*

Jesus went to his home town of Nazareth and taught in the synagogue. We may think, finally he will find some people who will be glad to see him. These were his home town people. Surely, these people would be pulling for him, and willing to stand with him. However, the opposite was true. They didn't believe any more than the rest of the people. They saw him only as the hometown boy who used to live in their neighborhood.

*Mt 13:55-56 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?*

They were amazed at his teaching because they knew who he was. This was his home town. They had seen him as he grew up. They knew he was a carpenter's son. They knew Joseph and Mary. As a young boy, Jesus had played with their children. Some of them were the ones who grew up playing with Jesus themselves. To them, he was an ordinary man.

Even though he was anything but ordinary, Jesus led a pretty much ordinary life until he was thirty years old. He submitted to his parents authority, and he worked the trade of Joseph. It is astounding to realize, the God who made this universe was working in a carpenter's shop.

But, his words and his works were not ordinary. His teaching amazed those who heard him. They knew he had no formal training, yet he spoke with such wisdom. They wondered, where did he obtain this knowledge?

They were amazed also, at the works he did. How could this man do such things?

This was not the last time Jesus was not recognized for who he is. Much of the world does not recognize him now.

His brothers and sisters were still among them. Since Joseph is not included here, there is a good chance that he had passed away. Contrary to what some say, these verses make it clear that Mary had children other than Jesus (cf Mt. 12:46).

*Mt 13:57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.*

The word "*offended*" means, to trip, or to stumble. They stumbled over the fact that he was the Messiah because they knew him as just one of the guys in the neighborhood. The fact of knowing him as they did, kept them from believing on him. They would not accept him to be who he claimed to be.

They were too familiar with Jesus to accept the fact that he was the Messiah. I am afraid the same thing happens to us.

We get so used to being saved, we take it for granted. The fact that our sin has been forgiven does not excite us any more. We get so used to being able to pray, we no longer see the glory of being able to enter the presence of the God of heaven and earth. Church becomes boring, prayer becomes ritualistic, and his goodness becomes expected. May he wake us up to the splendor of knowing him.

*Mt 13:58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.*

He wasn't able to do a lot of miracles in that place. The one, and only reason, their lack of faith. Why was this true?

Since they did not believe him, they did not come to him. Jesus told the Jews they would not come to him that they might have life (Jn. 5:40). God never forces anything on anyone.

Since they did not believe him, their unbelief hindered him. Faith moves God. Our lack of faith, keeps Him from working.

#### THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST 14:1-12

*Mt 14:1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,*

Jesus' reputation is growing. He is preaching, and his disciples are going out two by two, proclaiming the Word. Everyone is talking about him. Herod heard about this man who was causing such an uproar.

This is Herod Antipas. He was the son of the Herod the Great who tried to put Jesus to death just after his birth (Mt. 2). He is called "*tetrarch*". The word "*tetrarch*" means 'the ruler of a fourth part'. It simply means He had been assigned by Rome to oversee a portion of Israel.

As we will discover, Herod was a man who was driven by fear. He was an ungodly man.

These verses are a flashback to the events that led to the end of John's life.

*Mt 14:2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.*

Herod's response to hearing about Jesus is very telling. It reveals the fear that controlled his life. His first thought when he heard about Jesus was that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead.

My first thought is how this honors John the Baptist. John had lived a life that when Herod heard about Jesus, he thought of John. May we live in such a manner.

*Mt 14:3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.*

First, we see Herod's fear that John had come back from the dead. He had put John the Baptist to death.

Mark tells us that Herod feared John because he knew he was a godly man (Mk. 6:20).

It is not uncommon for a murderer to have a fear that the person they murdered would come back from the dead in order to get revenge. This certainly seems to what is happened to Herod.

In spite of his fear, Herod was curious about Jesus. Luke tells us he wanted to see Jesus (Lk. 9:7-9). He wanted to know more about this unusual man named Jesus.

*Mt 14:4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.*

Herod had a half-brother name Philip who lived in Rome. Herod had gone to Rome to visit his brother Philip. While he was there, he seduced Philip's wife. Her name was Herodias. Herod and Herodias divorced their spouses, and were married. No doubt, Herod would regret this decision more times that he could count.

Notice, the Holy Spirit still calls her, "*Philip's wife*". God never recognized their marriage.

John spoke out about Herod's sin. The greek tense of the word "said" indicates that John spoke about this sin more than once. Undoubtedly, he must have spoken against Herod's sin on several occasions. He was a man who was not afraid to name sin, even if that sin was committed by the rulers of the land.

*Mt 14:5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.*

Herod was furious about John's message against him and Herodias. His first thoughts were to do away with him. He thought, do away with the messenger, and you do away with the message.

But, once again, we see Herod's fear. He was afraid of the popularity of John. He was afraid that John's influence with the people might jeopardize his control over them.

*Mt 14:6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.*

John's message also made Herodias furious. No doubt, she laid in bed at night devising a plan to get rid of him. She would silence this man if it was the last thing she ever did. Herod's birthday offered her the perfect opportunity to do just that.

In that day, only pagans celebrated birthdays. The Romans celebrated birthdays with ungodly and vile parties. They involved drunkenness, gluttony, and ungodliness. They would drink and eat as much as they could hold. Then, women would be brought in to dance in a lewd manner.

This is exactly what happened at Herod's birthday party. However, as planned by Herodias, her daughter was the one who danced. She knew Herod would be drunk, and easily manipulated.

*Mt 14:7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.*

Herod made the second greatest mistake of his life. The first was marrying Herodias, the second was making her daughter this promise.

Herod had eaten until he could not eat another bite. He had drunk until he was a blabbering idiot. And now, he had been excited by the dance of this teenage girl. He is ripe for the picking. He fell into the trap.

Mark tells us Herod actually promised her anything up to half his kingdom (Mk. 6:23). This shows the utter stupidity of his condition. Sin controls in such a fashion as to rob all sense of reasoning.

*Mt 14:8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.*

Herodias' daughter, as instructed by her mother, asked for the head of John the Baptist. It is difficult to imagine just how ungodly Herodias was. How could she be so wicked as to use her own daughter in such a vile deed?

A "charger" was a platter.

*Mt 14:9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.*

Herod was sorry, but he still had no backbone. He feared Herodias. He knew he would not have any peace at home if he refused the girl's request. He feared the people. He knew they would think less of him if he did not keep his promise.

He was in a difficult situation. But, how much better would it have been if he had just done the right thing. All he had to do was tell them that he had made a promise in the heat of the moment. He had a chance to do right for a change. Yes, Herodias would have pitched a fit. Yes, some of the people would have thought less of him for not keeping his promise. But, it would have still been the right thing to do.

Some people may have been displeased with him, but God would have been pleased. It is better to have to favor of God than the approval of man.

*Mt 14:10–11 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.*

Herod sent to the dungeon where John was being held prisoner and had him beheaded.

And so, the deed was done. I wonder what Herodias' daughter was thinking as she carried the head of John to her mother. What thoughts did this young girl have? Were they thoughts of horror, or thoughts of devilish delight?

*Mt 14:12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.*

And so, John was dead. But, he died a victor. He died doing the Lord's service. He died obeying the One who would die for him. He died with a clear conscience. I say, what a wonderful way to leave this world. John's disciples came to get his body and bury it. They made sure Jesus knew.

#### THE FEEDING OF THE 5,000 14:13-21

*Mt 14:13 When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.*

Jesus takes his disciples, boards a ship, and goes to a secluded place.

Some have actually suggested that Jesus feared Herod, and left town because of it. How absurd! Jesus did not fear this little squirrel of a man named Herod. He feared no one. It simply was not time for Jesus to confront. It takes wisdom to know when to not fight.

Mark tells us that Jesus was seeking for a place where he and his disciples could have some time away from the crowds (Mk. 6:31). They needed rest. They needed time to recuperate. Finding such a place was not an easy task. Galilee was around 50 miles long and 25 miles wide. In this small area there were over 200 towns. So, finding a private place was not easy.

Their rest did not last long. Once the people heard, they followed him on foot. A man who can heal diseases can not expect to have much "alone" time.

*Mt 14:14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.*

The crowd caught up with Jesus. No doubt, as they had traveled, others had joined them. As we will see, it is a large crowd. Matthew described it as a "great multitude".

The sad truth is, most of them were seeking him only for healing. They had no intention to give themselves totally to him.

This verse says Jesus had compassion on these people. That is more than just feeling an obligation to them. It is more than just feeling like he should do the right thing. He genuinely cared. He felt their need. I am glad he still does. We have a high priest that is touched by the feelings of our infirmities (Heb. 4:15).

He needed rest, but the needs of the people were more important. He knew most of them were only after his healing and cared nothing about making him their Lord. Yet, he helped them anyway.

*Mt 14:15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.*

As the day wears on, the disciples began to get concerned about the welfare of the multitude. They had not eaten.

The disciples remedy to the problem was, just send them away. How many times is that our remedy. We want to get rid of the problem.

*Mt 14:16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.*

How could Jesus say such a thing? The disciples did not have the food it would take to feed this multitude.

He said this to make them face the facts. They did not have what was needed. They could not do what was required. They were about to learn a lesson we all need to learn. The lesson of helplessness. We cannot do what is needed. We do not have sufficient supply. It must come from, and through, Him.

*Mt 14:17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.*

A little boy had his lunch with him (Jn. 6:9). It consisted of five barley loaves and two small fish. Barley was the cheapest grain available. It was what the poor used to make their bread.

*Mt 14:18 He said, Bring them hither to me.*

Jesus asked for the little boy's lunch.

*Mt 14:19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.*

He had them sit on the grass in groups of hundreds and fifties (Mk. 6:40).

Jesus did this for at least three reasons.

One, he did it to keep things orderly. Can you imagine the chaos that would have been if Jesus just started handing out food to whoever was closest to him? Having them sitting made it possible to feed them without a riot.

Two, he did it to make sure everyone got fed. In these small groups it was easy to see that all were fed.

Three, he did it to make sure everyone could see what was happening. Had he just started handing out the food it would have been passed throughout the crowd. Those deep in the crowd would have not been able to see where it came from. His way, every person there knew it came from Jesus.

*Mt 14:20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.*

They were all "filled". This means they were so full, they had no desire for another bite. It was like a super buffet. They had eaten all they wanted.

There were 12 baskets of leftovers. One for each disciple. The amazing thing about this miracle is the fact that Jesus didn't just make enough food for the entire multitude to eat all they wanted, but he made just enough for each of his disciples to have something to eat. Jesus didn't make too much. He knows how to restrain his power when the occasion calls for it.

*Mt 14:21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.*

There was 5,000 men, not counting the women and children. Children were considered a blessing from God at that time. Every family had several. So, it not unreasonable to assume there was 15 or 20 thousand gathered there.

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS STORY

- Rest is needed

Jesus sought rest for himself and his disciples. Our bodies wear out. We need to take time to rest.

- Fellowship is important

Jesus didn't seek a place of solitude merely to rest. He knew the importance of his disciples spending time together. Christian fellowship is vital for us all.

- God cares

Jesus was truly moved by their need. If He was, we should be. We should care for those in need.

He taught them that even though rest is important, there will be times when rest has to be forfeited in order to help someone.

- God can

Even though the supply was lacking, it was no problem to Jesus to provide what was needed. Nothing is too big for God.

Do you ever feel like life is too much for you to handle? Does it seem like job is too big for you? Just remember, he still multiplies. He still has the touch. He can make your little, more than enough.

- God is a God of order

He had them sit down in groups. We should do things decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40).

- God is not wasteful

Jesus had the leftovers taken up. He used what was leftover. Nothing was wasted.

- God should be obeyed

I can't imagine what the disciples thought as they were having the multitude sit down in groups.

We need to learn how to obey Him, even when it doesn't make sense to us.

- We must be broken if we are to be used

He “broke” the bread.

He TOOK the bread, he TORE the bread, and he TRANSFORMED the bread. But, it could not be transformed until it was torn.

- We should give

The disciples received the food from Jesus. But then, they had to give it away. We should be funnels. A funnel doesn't hang on to anything. It lets what comes into it, pass through. What we get from God, we should be willing to pass on to others.

Also, we must consider one thing that is not discussed in these verses. That is, what did Jesus eat? We may assume that he ate nothing, but I believe some of the disciples gave him some of what was in their baskets.

- God deserves the glory

They knew where their lunch came from. Every time they took a bite, they remembered, this came from God.