

Theme:

*What Jesus
Taught About...*

September 23-25, 2005

WEST JEFFERSON CHURCH OF CHRIST



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Taught About...
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FORWARD

Of all the great teachers that have graced this world, there are none greater than our Lord Jesus Christ. At the end of the most beautiful discourse that ever fell upon human ears, "the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:28-29). Jesus the Christ knew how to teach mankind the perfect lesson in the perfect manner. We, therefore, have great blessings and privileges in the teachings of our Lord, which have been recorded in the New Testament for those living yet today.

Without the teachings of Jesus the Christ, we have no hope. Peter acknowledged, when the disciples were asked if they would also go away, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast **the words of eternal life**. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69). The teachings of Jesus the Christ are the only means which will provide eternal life; by learning and applying them. They are of such importance, we have been warned about the dangers of: (1) perverting the Gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:6-9), (2) failing to abide in His doctrine (II John 9), and (3) accepting or supporting any other doctrine (II John 10-11).

The purpose of our study of these lessons is to exalt Jesus the Christ and His teaching and to emphasize to us the vast importance of the studying, properly understanding, accepting and applying teachings of Jesus Christ into our own life. As we journey through this life, may we always seek to learn "What Jesus taught about..."

Tim Canup
June 23, 2005

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So Human, So Divine

By R. G. Lee

He was so human, that He got tired, but He was so divine
that He said, 'come unto me all ye that are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest';

He was so human He became hungry,
He was so divine He took five loaves and two fish and fed
five thousand;

So thirsty He came to Jacob's well, so divine He there said,
'Whoever drinks of the water I shall give will never thirst
again'

So human He had the need to pray,
So divine that in all of His prayer, there was no confession
of sins;

So human He had to sleep,
So divine He arose from sleep and stilled the raging storm;

So human that He accepted an invitation to a wedding,
So divine that He there changed the water into wine;

So human, that He was in all points tempted like as we
are,
So divine that He could ask, 'which of you convicts me of
sin?'

So human that He wept,
So divine that He stood at that grave and raised the dead
brother back to life;

So human He grew in wisdom and in stature,
So divine that He upheld all things by the word of His
power.

Chapter 1
The Master Teacher & His Authority
Eddy Craft

Eddy Craft was born in Signal Mountain, TN. He graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in 1972. He conducts a weekly Television Program, "Biblical Viewpoints" which is seen in Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, and Jackson, Mississippi. He also is involved in a weekly Radio Program, "Arise To Truth." He has preached in Saltville, VA, Rogersville, TN, Abingdon, VA, Luray, VA, and has been the minister for the Elizabethton Church of Christ in Elizabethton, TN for the past twenty-four years.

He has been involved in numerous Gospel Meetings and Lectureships. He is now a full-time instructor for the Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development and serves as the Dean of Students. He is married to Betty (Cook) and they have three children and four grandchildren.

My subject for this lectureship is "The Master Teacher And His Authority." Those that had the privilege of hearing Jesus in person could recognize that His teaching was different from anyone else that they had ever heard teach. It is said of Jesus: "The officers answered, Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:28-29). In this lecture I want to notice why we should look to Jesus and his teaching for our authority.

It should be impressed upon our minds in the first place that there are only two sources of authority, heaven or men. Jesus made this very clear in the following passages.

And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said

unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things (Matthew 21:23-27).

To reject the Christ and His teaching is the same as saying that one can rely on his own conscience. The Bible, however, shows this idea to be false. Proverbs 16:2,25 "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits... (25) There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Man is incapable of discerning the truth without God and His Word. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Man's thoughts and ways are different from God's. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). Brethren, we cannot afford to rely on human wisdom to obey God.

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to

nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord (1 Corinthians. 1:18-31).

When our worship is done by the authority of man it is in vain. "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7). The majority are on the road that leads to destruction and we

will be as well if we follow some one other than the Christ and His teaching.

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 (Matthew 7:13-14).

We should follow Jesus and His teaching because He is the only way of salvation. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). He did not say that He was one of many ways but that He was THE WAY! Luke, in the book of Acts, recorded the following, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). My friends, Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Thus our Lord was able to invite people to Him for rest (Matthew 11:28-30). God made it very clear who we should follow and listen to. Notice the following references.

And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him (Matthew 17:3-5).

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us

by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (Hebrews 1:1-2).

We should look to Jesus and His teaching because of the great compassion that He had for mankind. Jesus was a man of feelings. He had feelings of His own, and He had feeling for others. As a human Jesus knew what it was to be hungry, thirsty, tired, emotionally hurt, sad and angry. He also knew what it meant to feel for others-to share their sorrows, sadness, hurt, and need. Our English word "compassion" means: "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress, together with a desire to alleviate it."¹ Literally the word means to feel with. Let's track some examples of the compassion of Christ, with the thought of emulating His deep desire to meet the needs of others.

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. 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 (Matthew 9:35-36).

The word translated "compassion" is from the word which means "to be moved as to one's inwards, to be moved with compassion, to yearn with compassion."² It is the same word that is used to describe the feelings of the father of a demon-possessed son (Mark 9:22). The word describes that sudden rush of sympathy and pity that is felt deep down on the inside, in what the King James Version 1611 refers to as "bowels." It is the gut-wrenching feeling of pity, sympathy, tenderness, and love that reaches out to receive and to help. This is the feeling of Jesus toward the multitude.

We also see the compassion of Jesus with the two blind men on His way to Jerusalem. Jesus passed through Jericho:

And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him (Matthew 20:29-34).

Again, we are impressed with pity and mercy Jesus had for these two unfortunate men.

Our last example of the compassion of Christ is from the Gospel of Luke:

And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a

fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people (Luke 7:11-16).

Observe that as a result of Christ's compassion toward this widow, the people gloried God. They knew that a great prophet was among them. This is just another way of saying that we should follow Christ and His teaching because of His compassion.

Is it important today for the church, the body of Christ, to be a compassionate people? Would greater compassion on our part cause more people to glorify God? Would greater compassion on our part enable the world to recognize Christ for Who He really is?

Christ is deeply concerned about the spiritual guidance and direction of people. His heart goes out to people who have no one who truly cares for them-no one to show them the right way. Ezekiel, the prophet wrote:

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered (Ezekiel 34:1-5).

Later, through the prophet, God said:

For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day (Ezekiel 34:11-12).

One of the great needs of the church of today is for compassionate shepherds and compassionate, spiritual-minded Christians who will truly care for those who have wandered away (Galatians 6:1). People don't care how much we know till they know how much we care!

Not only should we follow the Christ and His teachings because of His compassion, but because of His Courtesy. We see volumes in the behavior of Jesus as Peter told of Him: "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). There are some tools, incentives, and guidelines for Christian courtesy found in 1 Peter 3:8-18. Notice the richness of the text.

Christian courtesy eliminates revenge: "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:9). The apostle Paul taught this very important lesson about not rendering evil for evil. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). Brethren, it is impossible to render Christian courtesy when one constantly seeks to "render evil for evil." The Christian must never take justice into his own hands. Jesus instructs:

Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again (Luke 6:28-30).

With such a governing principle in the Christian's life, vengeance is eliminated.

Christian courtesy eliminates sinning with the tongue. "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (1 Peter 3:10). James the brother of Jesus wrote the following about the tongue:

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. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth (James 3:2-5).

Christian courtesy is not only demonstrated by one's conduct, but it is also proven by one's speech. "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:37). The Word of God teaches us that our Christian reputation is connected with our vocabulary. Misuses of the tongue can breach our courtesy.

Christian courtesy can be choked by lying. "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (Colossians 3:9).

Christian courtesy is harmed by cursing. "Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Titus 2:8). Our speech must be spiritually healthy or else it will condemn and the world will have evil to say of us.

Christian courtesy is harmed by backbiting. "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Proverbs 26:22).

Christian courtesy eliminates unrighteous conduct.

Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil (1 Peter 3:11-12).

The Christian turns away from evil to be Christ like. When one studies the Word of God carefully, he will see the various catalogs of sin in the scriptures (Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5-9; Romans 1:18-32), that many of the fleshly deeds therein described are to be those which fail to regard the thoughts, feelings, and freedoms of others.

It does not take a Solomon to see that the Christ was a man of courtesy. How can we wear that beautiful name Christian, and not emulate the blessed Christ when it comes to courtesy?

We have noticed the compassionate and courteous Christ. Now let us notice the Confrontational Christ. It is sad but true that some think that they can follow the Christ and be a faithful Christian without being confrontational. Brethren we are in a war with the devil and we must not forget it.

The Lord is described as both a lamb and lion in the scriptures. He is called a lamb. He is called the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29). "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before his shearer is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth..." (Acts 8:32). In the New Testament He is described as a lion:

And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof (Revelation 5:4-5).

The spirit of a lamb is vastly different to that of the lion. The basic lesson must be this: when the Lord is personally attacked he does not seek vengeance-He does not retaliate (1 Peter 2:22-23). When the Lord was accused by the chief priest and elders, "He answered them nothing" (Matthew 27:12). When Pilate said to Him, "Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" He gave him no answer, "not even one word: insomuch that the governor marveled greatly" (Matthew 27:12-14). But, when an attack was made upon His teaching-His doctrine-it was a different matter, He fought back, and He fought hard. He refuted, He condemned. It was the Lion in action. The following will illustrate such:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves... (25) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess... (27-28) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like

unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matthew 23:15,25,27-28).

Brethren, the Lord was confrontational and if we are going to follow this marvelous teacher we will stand and defend the truth. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The apostle Peter also points out that we must make a defense for the truth. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer {Greek for give an answer means make defense} to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

Brethren, it has been stressed that Jesus is our example and that His way is the only way. In following Jesus we will be compassionate, courteous, and confrontational. The Bible, the Word of God, is the only authority that we have from God and it must be followed. It is the book that will judge us in the last day. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). This being true, following the Master Teacher and His Authority will determine our eternal destiny. We often sing, "Who Will Follow Jesus Standing for the Right?"

Jesus does not have some authority or most, but He has it all. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). The word "power" in this verse means authority. This is seen when Peter and John were asked:

"And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" (Acts 4:7). They were asking by what authority are you doing these things? If we had no other reason than this it should be sufficient to follow Christ and His authority. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17).

Finally, we should follow Christ because of the compensation that we will receive or the punishment that will follow if we don't! If we will follow Christ and be faithful we can receive a crown of life.

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12). "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

If one refuses to follow Christ and His teaching then he will be eternally separated from God.

Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking

vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9).

The final choice will be ours. What decision will we make? "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46).

WORKS CITED

All Scriptures quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

¹Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.

²W. E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p. 218.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eddy Craft". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the page.

Chapter 2

Respecting the Law of God

Clayton Winters

Clayton Winters was born near Mountain City, TN, on July 15, 1931. He is married to the former Vivian May, and they are the parents of three children: Evelyn, Sandra, and David.

Clayton began his preaching career in 1951. Since that time he has served as local preacher for a number of Churches of Christ in the East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia area. For the past forty years he has labored with the Erwin Church of Christ, Erwin, TN. Thirty-five of these years were as the full-time preacher, and since his retirement from that position he has served as an elder for the congregation.

He has held meetings in about 12 states, conducted radio programs during the most of his ministry; and for twenty-six years has been involved in the Biblical Viewpoints TV Program, aired in several states. In addition to this, he is the author of commentaries covering Kings through Esther, as well as numerous other books, tracts, workbooks, and articles for other published works.

He received his formal education at Milligan College and Immanuel School of Religion.

Old farmers liked to sit around, chew their tobacco, and compare the accuracy of their wind-up watches. They would meticulously tinker with the regulators until they were accurate to within one or two minutes a week—quite a feat for a spring-driven watch. I understand that railroad men did the same thing with their timepieces, as they proudly displayed engravings of locomotives on the backs of the cases. We recently purchased a clock that is “guaranteed accurate to within one-millionth of a second.” Now that is one precise timepiece (eat your heart out farmers and railroaders!).

The pride our forefathers took in the accuracy of their twenty-one-jewel time pieces is a good illustration of the respect Jesus held for His Father’s Law, both in regard to the message and in His obedience thereto—accurate down to the most minute detail. This could be demonstrated in

numerous ways; the discussion to follow will list only a few.

Jesus' Respect for the Law Reflected by His Baptism

John the Baptist came "In the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17; see also Isaiah, 40:1-4; Malachi 4:4-6; Matthew 3:1-3; Matthew 17:10-13). In doing this his baseline message was repentance and baptism for the remission of sins.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins (Mark 1:1-5).

And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Luke 3:3).

As John's voice reverberated through the Judean hills, the Jordan Valley quickly filled with penitents seeking the promised remission of sins through baptism. Others, marked by their arrogance and self-righteousness as Abraham's seed, refused to acknowledge their sinfulness, felt no need for reformation of character, and thus saw no

reason for responding to John's entreaties. For them it would have been a baptism for the remission of sins, which they piously believed they did not have.

Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin 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. And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire (Luke 3:7-9).

For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him (Luke 7:28-30).

John's preaching clearly stood out in its essential elements: (1) His exhortations were a clarion call to repentance and reformation of life. (2) The baptism he administered was an obedient action designed to procure the remission of sins. (3) Those who had no sins, or who piously refused to confess them, were not candidates for his baptism.

Despite these clearly specified elements of John's baptism, One "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:22) suddenly cast a shadow along the banks of the Jordan, requesting baptism at the hands of the

wilderness preacher. John strongly rebuked Him; why should a sinner baptize the Sinless?

And now also the ax 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. 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: 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. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? 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 (Matthew 3:10-15).

Two questions relative to this incident are paramount. First, why did John initially refuse to honor the Lord's request for baptism? And, secondly, having no sins to remit, why did Jesus insist on baptism at the hands of the unworthy baptizer?

The answer to the first query is very obvious: John's baptism was for the remission of sins; but here was One who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). Having never violated God's Law, He needed no baptism of repentance for forgiveness. To administer baptism to such a One would fall a little short of mockery, maybe even blasphemy. John knew it would be the sinner baptizing the Sinless, thus the assertion, "I have need to be baptized of thee." Nothing could more firmly establish the

essential nature and purpose of John's baptism than this conversation between John and the divine Son of God. False teachers muddle the whole scenario when they insist the spotless Savior was baptized to exemplify a baptism of one who is already saved—a baptism that had nothing to do with the remission of sins. But this nullifies the Scripturally stated purpose of John's baptism, and makes John's refusal to baptize Jesus ridiculous in the extreme.

The answer to the second question should be equally obvious: It was a necessary action to demonstrate Jesus lived in complete compliance to the total will and Word of God: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness: all the commands of God" (Matthew 3:15; see also Psalm 119:172). Jesus thus demonstrated His intent to honor by obedience every command of His Father, even though the stated purpose of the particular command did not, nor could not, apply to His unique situation. No firmer testimony of Jesus' unfaltering respect and obedience to the Scriptures could be given. In every aspect of His life He manifested absolute submission: "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7). And what does this say about sinful man who needs a baptism of repentance, but argues it is non-essential, and arrogantly refuses to submit to this divine injunction?

Jesus' Respect for the Law Reflected in His Temptation

Stated in the most forthright way, sin is a world-wide malady from which none is exempt, and from which there is no human means of escape:

What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

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There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one (Romans. 3:9-12).

And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness (1 John 5:19).

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Romans 7:24).

With all under sin, all come under the curse of the Law: that is, the penalty passed by Law on all violators—death. It is an inevitable sentence from which none are exempt.

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them (Galatians 3:10).

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him (Ezekiel 18:20).

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Rom. 5:12).

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23).

Since all men had sinned and in that way came under its curse, none could pay the penalty, either for himself or for another; his life had already been bartered to sin, and execution of the curse was inevitable (Romans 7:14-24). What the world needed, indeed, what the world must have, was a sinless Redeemer who could and would willingly offer Himself as a substitute for others. Only one Person gracing this planet of the doomed ever met these qualifications: Jesus Christ. He was the Lamb without blemish (Exodus 12:5; John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7); the Man without guile (John 1:47); the Priest who needed no sacrifice for Himself (Hebrews 5:1-3; 7:24-28; 10:11-12); a sinless Substitute—His death in lieu of ours (Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:21-25).

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1 Peter 1:18-20).

For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself (Hebrews 7:26-27).

Satan well knew this when he entered the wilderness arena to do combat with Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11). With so much riding on the outcome, he engaged the Son of God in a no-gloves, no-holds-barred struggle. Should he win, he would disqualify the world's only possible Redeemer. The man "who knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21) would join the innumerable hosts of earth subject to the curse of the Law. In this wilderness battle, the salvation of the world literally hung on the outcome. With the stakes so high, the battle of the ages was joined: the high priest of evil pitted against heaven's perfect Jewel.

"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" (Matthew 4:3). Due to forty days and forty nights without food, this temptation hit Jesus with magnum force in His weakest hour (Luke 4:3). Besides this, the sin in succumbing was so very cleverly concealed. What could possibly be wrong with His turning stones to bread? After all, one day soon He would multiply five loaves and two fish into an abundance sufficient to feed five thousand (Matthew 14:14-21), or seven loaves and a few fish into enough to feed nearly that many again (Matthew 15:30-38). But Jesus found precedent in the Scriptures for what the Spirit had driven Him into the wilderness to accomplish: "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" (Matthew 4:4).

This citation came from another wilderness of temptation (Hebrews 3:8), involving other sons of God divinely led into a similar situation. They, too, were experiencing empty stomachs and dry mouths. But their deprivation was the will of God and had a high and noble purpose:

All the commandments which I command thee
this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live,
and multiply, and go in and possess the land

which the LORD swore unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD (Deuteronomy 8:1-3).

If Israel was to be God's servant, she had to learn absolute faith and confidence in God's leadership and providential care. This was all the precedence Jesus needed. He was in the wilderness by the Father's will (Mark 3:12-13); He would depend on that Father to supply His needs in His own time and in His own way. Satan staggered from this powerful rebuke; he had lost a decisive struggle in the battle for souls. If the great adversary did not know it before, he knew it now. He was in combat with the Master of the universe, whose weapon was the "living and active Word of God" (Hebrews 4:12-13).

That being the case, Satan would attempt to turn that weapon against Jesus. Thus, from the pinnacle of the temple he chided his object of temptation: "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" (Matthew 4:6). He had proved no match for Jesus even in His weakest moment of deprivation, nor was he more successful in his mutilation of the divine message. Jesus countered, "It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:7). What God is able to do, and what man might want to coerce Him into

doing, as a mere ego boost to pride, are concepts that widely differ; but Jesus clearly differentiates between the two. The pride of life is not of the father, but of the world; and Jesus was not to be coerced into that dead-end street (1 John 2:15-16). So Satan takes another hard jab to the head while trying to strike the master Teacher's heel (Genesis 3:15).

Satan has suffered two downs, but he is not out; he positions himself for a third assault against the Lord. From the traditional Mount of Temptation, the Jericho Road leading to Jerusalem is clearly visible. That would be the last road the incarnate Jesus would walk, and at the end of it awaited the indignity of mockery, spat in the face, ripped and bleeding flesh, thorns on the head, a cross on His back, and nails in His hands and feet—the price for His kingdom (Acts 20:28). But Satan offers Him an easy out: “Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:8-9). As they were before, Satan's temptation was designed to maximize the pressure on the One who had been born to kingship (Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 7:13-14; Luke 1:31-35; John 18:37), and to present an option to the agony of the cross—a panorama of all the kingdoms of the world with their consequent glory and power (Luke 4:5-6). Again, the mighty written Word is the Savior's weapon of choice: “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Luke 4:8). Satan cuts his losses and retreats. The Son of God emerges from the struggle undaunted; still the sinless incarnate One could offer the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world.

How much confidence and respect did Jesus have for the Word of God? Enough to depend on it as His only

weapon when the salvation of the world hung in the balance.

Jesus' Respect for the Law Reflected by Jots and Tittles

No greater statement of respect for the holy Scriptures is found anywhere—their dependability, durability, and unchangeability—than that which was voiced by our Savior in His Sermon on the Mount:

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. 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 (Matthew 5:17-19).

Other than in this context, “jots” and “tittles” have little place in our modern vocabulary. In fact, most would be hard put to define them in a meaningful way. Yet, they are extremely important to our understanding of just what kind of regard Jesus had for the revealed Law of God. Thayer defines *iota* (jot) as “the Hebr. letter ‘, the smallest of them all; hence equiv. to the minutest part” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 311). The same authority defines *keraiia* (tittle) as “a little horn; extremity, apex, point; used by the Grk. grammarians of the accents and diacritical points...of the little lines or projections by which the Hebr. letters in other respects similar differ from each other, as י and ם, ך and ך, ך and ך; the meaning is ‘not even the minutest part of the law

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shall perish” (344). Some translators view them equivalent to the dotting of an “i” or the crossing of a “t.”

Contrasting this with denominational doctrines that deny and belittle Scriptural precepts (as we have done below), should cause one to truly appreciate the Lord’s honor and respect for the sacred Word, even down to the jots and tittles:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” John 14:6)

“One way is just as good as another.”

“For if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24).

“It doesn’t matter what one believes just as long as he is sincere.”

“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:24)

“Faith alone is all that is needed to procure salvation.”

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in *obeying* the truth” (1 Peter 1:22-23).

“*Obedience* has nothing to do with purifying the soul.”

“He that believeth and *is* baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16)

“He that believeth and *is not* baptized shall be saved.”

“Baptism doth also now *save* us” (1 Peter 3:20-21).

“Baptism has *nothing* to do with saving us”

“Whosoever of you are justified by law; ye are fallen from Grace” (Galatians 5:4).

"A child of God cannot fall from the grace of God."

Furthermore, Jesus always readily defended the Scriptures as being instructive, complete, final and authoritative.

"But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matthew 26:54).

"If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

"And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner" (Mark 12:10)

"I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled" (Mark 14:49)

"And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?" (Mark 12:24).

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

"For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken" (John 19:36).

The apostle Peter said, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

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When we walk in those footprints left on Galilee's shore, we will have nothing but the utmost respect for the Word of God.

God bless you.
Go with God
Arayton

Chapter 3
Preparing for the Second Coming
Tim Canup

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus said to His apostles just before His crucifixion, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3). This is a promise made by our Lord that He will keep! It is of utmost importance that we all realize there will be a day in which Jesus will return and every individual will stand before Him in judgment. Therefore, we all must accept the responsibility to prepare for that day!

No one ever has an acceptable excuse for doing poorly on a test when they were adequately warned. Although we do not know the exact time when Jesus will return, we have received adequate warning. Jesus frequently taught concerning His second coming and the need to be prepared for that day. We all will be present for the judgment and will be without excuse if we are unprepared. Let us examine three passages from the Gospel according to Matthew, which will help us to be prepared for Jesus' second coming.

THE WISE & FOOLISH BUILDERS (MATTHEW 7)

In order for us to have a proper understand of what Jesus is teaching in this passage, we must look at it in its proper context; it is part of the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus said:

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 here describes the only two possible ways we can travel in this life; we can and must choose which way we will travel. Considering that there are only two possible paths in which we may travel, Jesus warned in verses 15-20 of "false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." There are those who are followers of Satan who (whether intentionally or unintentionally) desire to devour those who choose to follow the "narrow way" (cf. II Corinthians 11:14-15, Romans 16:17-18, et al.). Jesus made known to us the fact that "by their fruits ye shall know them" (verses 16 & 20). To illustrate this, Jesus uses the fruit from trees and vines.

In verses 21-23, Jesus emphasized that it is not the case that everyone will be accepted, regardless of how "religious" one may be, unless a person "doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." In verse 21, the use of the words in the phrases "Not (*ou*) everyone that saith" and "but (*all*) he that doeth" is a "sharp contrast between the mere talker and the doer of God's will" (Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. I, 62). There are many who call Him Lord and in His name do many wonderful works; however, the pronouncement is, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Only those

who "doeth the will of my Father" will be accepted with God, which demands complete obedience!

Consider the observation made by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

Our Lord has finished His sermon on the Mount and has given His detailed instruction, He has laid down all His great and vital principles, and He is now applying the truth. He is confronting His followers with the two possibilities; they must all go in at one or other of the two gates, either at the narrow gate or at the broad gate, and they will walk either the narrow way or the broad way. His purpose has been to help them as they face this choice. To that end He has shown them how to recognize and avoid the subtle temptations and dangers which invariably confront those who are in that situation. In these verses our Lord continues with the same theme. Notice the connection. It is not something new; rather it is a continuation and final clinching of His earlier argument. **It is the same warning about the dangers of lack of obedience, of being content with listening to the Gospel and not putting it into practice"** (Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Vol. II, 295 - emphasis added).

Now, consider our text:

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: 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. 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: 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 (Matthew 7:24-27).

This section begins with "Therefore," which is a conclusion to what Jesus has just said. Considering the fact that we only have two paths to walk and the fact that there are false teachers who are seeking to lead us astray, it is not good enough just to be religious. Jesus said, "whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them..." (verse 24). The hearing Jesus intended is not simply taking in audible sounds into our ears alone; it involves a comprehending and understanding of concepts and principles in Jesus' teachings, which naturally excludes infants and young children. Jesus also included the word "doeth," which demands action on our part; thus forever defeating the thought that we have nothing to do with our salvation. The contrast to hearing and doing God's Will is clearly seen in Jesus' words, "everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not" (verse 26), which is equivalent to disobedient!

Jesus then illustrates obedience and disobedience by giving a contrast between building on a foundation of rock and of sand. Most can easily understand the contrast that is being made. Those who build on the rock are referred to as "wise," from the Greek word (*phronimos*), which has the meaning "understand, practically wise, sensible" (Rogers & Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 17). No one who desires to build a strong, lasting house will build on the shifting sand, rather, they will, as Luke states it, "...dugged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock" (Luke 6:48). Notice the house that is being built; it is not a physical house, for Jesus never emphasized the physical. It is not a reference to the church; Jesus Christ alone is the One who built it, man could never. The house to which Jesus referred here is our

lives! "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it..." (Psalm 127:1). The rock on which we are to build our lives is the Christ!

The way we live directly effects our eternal destination. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10). John wrote in Revelation 20:12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." The statements "things done in his body" and "according to their works" describe either our obedience or the lack thereof. Remember Jesus' Words: "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" (Matthew 7:21). Concerning Jesus the Christ, the writer of Hebrews wrote, "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9). A failure of comply to the will of God in complete obedience is equivalent to building on a foundation laid in sand, which will always result in the destruction of the house built thereon.

THE WISE & EVIL SERVANT (MATTHEW 24)

Again, notice the context: this is in the midst of Jesus' discourse with His disciples concerning the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. In Matthew 24:1, Jesus departed from the temple and His disciples went to Him to show Him the beautiful buildings of the temple. In verse 2, Jesus said, "verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down," in prediction of the coming destruction of the temple in A.D.

70. Then in verse 3, perhaps in associating the destruction of the temple with the end of world, the disciples ask two questions: 1.) "Tell us, when shall these things be?" and, 2.) "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" In verses 4-35, Jesus answered their first question, which is a prediction of the destruction of the temple, which was fulfilled in AD 70. Then in verse 36, Jesus begins His answer of their second question; the sign of His coming and the end of world. Remember, concerning His second coming, Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (verse 36). Concerning the signs of His second coming there will be no signs. He then gives the example of the days of Noah (verses 37-39).

Now, consider our text:

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the

hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 24:42-51).

Again, our text is connected with what Jesus has just said with the word, "therefore." Jesus is now going to emphasize the importance of being prepared for His second coming with an illustration. Let us examine this text concerning our need to be prepared for Jesus' second coming.

Considering the fact that we do not know when Jesus will come again, we must "Watch...for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come..." (verse 42). These words serve as the foundation to what Jesus is about to teach through chapter 25. In verse 43, Jesus gives the following contrast: "But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up." Peter wrote to urge his readers, since Jesus' return could happen at any time, to be prepared. He wrote:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (II Peter 3:10-12).

Peter used the phrase "as a thief in the night" to indicate that it will happen unexpectedly (cf. I Thessalonians 5:2), just as Jesus had taught His disciples

Chapter 3: Preparation for the Second Coming

here in Matthew 24-25. Peter encouraged his readers that since this could happen at any moment, they should live their life in such a manner as to be always ready. In verse 12, concerning the return of Jesus, Peter said, "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God..." The American Standard Version of 1901 renders this "looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God..." It is the faithful Christian that is living his or her life in a manner that they are eagerly awaiting Jesus' return, not dreading it or hoping that it will not yet be. Paul expressed anxiety of his desire to depart and be with Christ (Philippians 1:23-24). John closed his writings of the Revelation of Jesus Christ with, "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). No one knows when a thief will come to rob; therefore, we must constantly prepare to prevent such a tragedy! Based on the facts of the unknown time of His return, Jesus then says, "**Therefore be ye also ready:** for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (verse 44).

As we prepare to be constantly ready for His return, we must be watchful, not carelessly wandering about from day to day. Concerning our daily manner of life, Paul wrote, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:15-17). The Bible uses the term "walk" to describe our manner of life. The term "circumspectly" describes the watchfulness or carefulness we are to use as we travel through this life so as to avoid the dangers that confront us. Paul said, "Not as fools but wise...but understand what the will of the Lord is," which should remind us of Jesus' statement "whosoever doeth the will of my Father..."

In verses 45-51, Jesus gives us another contrast, this time of a faithful and an evil servant. Jesus asks the

rhetorical question, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?" (verse 45). Jesus answers this question with the statement in verse 46, "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." The faithful servant is the one doing the Master's will. However, of the evil (or unfaithful) servant, Jesus said, "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken" (verses 48-49). The evil servant is one who has put off doing the Lord's Will and has convinced himself that the Lord has delayed his return. Self-deception is most dangerous! We learn in verse 50, the Master's return will be at a time that is least expected and the evil servant is unprepared because he has become distracted. In verse 51, we are told that there will be punishment for those who are not prepared. We are servants of God. We have been given work to do and the ample warning to be prepared for His return. No person can afford to allow his or her attention to be distracted, which will leave one unprepared for the Lord's return?

THE WISE & FOOLISH VIRGINS (MATTHEW 25)

As is always, it is important for us to understand the context. In this chapter, Jesus continues His discussion from chapter 24 of His second coming. He gives several parables as illustrations to emphasize the necessity of being prepared. In the first twelve verses, Jesus gives the parable of the ten virgins: five wise and five foolish. Let us notice our text:

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were

foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh (Matthew 25:1-13).

If we divide our text into subsections, verses 1-4 compares the "kingdom of heaven" to ten virgins. The phrase "kingdom of heaven" is used in the Bible for both the church and heaven (dwelling place of God). The context seems to indicate that Jesus was referring to the church. It was a common custom at weddings at this time for the friends of the bride to stay with her, to keep her company until the arrival of the bridegroom, at which time they were to trim their lamps, go out to meet the bridegroom, and follow in procession to the bridegroom's house. Fred H. Wight wrote:

The bridegroom set out with the bride from the house of her parents, and there followed a grand procession all the way to his house. The streets of Asiatic cities were dark, and it was necessary that

anybody venturing forth at night should carry a lamp or torch... Those invited guests, who did not go to the bride's home were allowed to join the procession along the way, and go with the whole group to the marriage feast. Without a torch or lamp they couldn't join the procession, or enter the bridegroom's house (Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*, 131-132).

"The primary reference of this parable is to the second coming of Christ, and it was designed to enforce the lesson of constant watchfulness for that event" (Taylor, *The Parables Of Our Lord*, 164). If the "kingdom of heaven" is the church, then the virgins would be members of the church. Those who are in the world have not prepared at all for His coming. The force of Jesus' teaching is that not all who are in the kingdom (members of the church) will be prepared. We see that half of the virgins did not properly prepare in that they did not bring enough oil with them. There is a constant need to be prepared. William Taylor again writes concerning this parable:

It is so realistic in its details as to give an accurate description of an Eastern marriage procession... But what can equal the grouping of the various figures; the startling suddenness of the midnight cry; the haste of the surprised sleepers; and the sadness of the disappointed ones, as they cry with piercing earnestness, "Lord, Lord, open to us"? Even as a work of art, this parable is faultless as its author; and though there were no spiritual meaning throbbing beneath it, we could not but be impressed with its simple naturalness, its rapid movement, its tragic pathos, and its silent close as the midnight gloom folds in upon and hides the sadness of those who are shut out. When, however, we go deeper into it, and discover its

spiritual significance, we find ourselves concerned; and we have no time for admiring the beauties of the parable, because of the pressing and personal importance of the truths which it suggests (Taylor, 164-165).

In verses 5-9, we read that when the bridegroom came, the five foolish virgin's lamps no longer had enough supply of oil to continue to burn them. The King James Version states in verse 8, that the "lamps are gone out." In the original Greek, the idea is that the lamps "are going out." The tense used here is one "which denotes something in progress" (Vincent, *Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. I, 132). They did not go out all at once, it was a gradual process. In no way were the five wise virgins obligated to give of their supply of oil to the others, at the risk of themselves running out and losing their own standing with the bridegroom; thus, missing entrance into the wedding ceremony. There are areas in which we are to help others, but not to the detriment of our own soul. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2). However, in verses 4-5, we are commanded: "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden." Paul wrote in Philippians 2:12 "...work out your own salvation." No parent can do for a child; a wife cannot do for her husband. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

Again, William Taylor rightly points out:

Note, then, that all had some knowledge of, and regard for, the bridegroom, and desired to honor him by going forth to meet him as he led home

his bride. Note, further, that they all had lamps which at the moment were burning. Note, once more, that while the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept. Not until his coming was announced did the difference between them develop itself. But then it was seen, that some of them had prudently provided for certain contingencies by taking with them a reserve supply of oil, while others had contented themselves with simply filling their lamps (Taylor, 165-166).

It is the idea that there are those who are seeking the rewards and blessings of the Lord, yet have failed to prepare themselves to receive them. Many will miss the eternal reward of heaven because they sought to do only as little as they could to get by.

Verses 10-12 inform us that while the foolish virgins went in search of oil, the bridegroom came, went into the marriage feast, "and the door was shut." The tense that is used here in the original Greek is a tense which indicates that when the door was shut, it was shut to stay! There was a great deal of celebration associated with the wedding feast. Being granted entrance into it was a great blessing and joy. The wise were allowed to be part of the celebration. When the door was shut, being late was an insult to the master of the ceremony; thus, entrance was not granted to any late arrivers. James M. Freeman wrote:

At all formal banquets the invited guests presented their tablets or cards to a servant stationed at the entrance-door for the purpose, care being taken to keep out uninvited spectators. When the company were assembled the "master of the house" shut the door, and after that the servant was not allowed to admit any one, no

matter how great the importunity (Freeman, *Bible Manners and Customs*, 379).

Any late-arrivers were given the pronouncement, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (Matthew 25:12). Jesus gives the same pronouncement to those who do not do the will of the Father in Matthew 7:21.

Jesus draws a conclusion to the principles taught in this parable. Considering that the coming of the bridegroom (Christ) was unknown to the virgins (Christians), therefore, we must always be prepared for His coming. Jesus said, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." It is of utmost importance for the Christian to constantly be watchful for the coming of his Lord. We have been warned of His return; therefore, there will be no acceptable excuse given!

CONCLUSION

We have noticed three passages of Jesus' teaching concerning our preparation for His second coming. Although there are numerous others we could have examined, in these we can clearly see that we are either prepared or we are not. We are either wise or we are not. It is **not** the case that there will be a middle ground on which to build that will make one "kinda" wise, or a middle degree of servitude; one is either wise or evil. There simply is no middle ground of being prepared! No person can be "kinda" or "almost" ready and be pleasing to God. It will not be the case that God will one day ask us if it is a convenient time for Him to come again. Therefore, we ask the question found in the chorus of the old hymn, "Are you ready...?". We have been assured throughout the Scriptures that Jesus Christ will come again, thus we **must** be ready for that day; we must be prepared!

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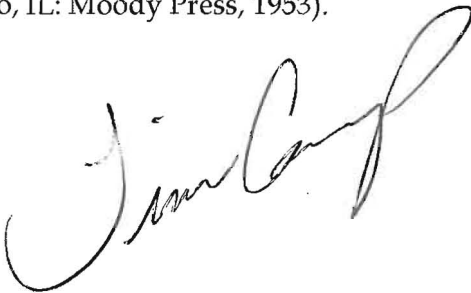
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Canup". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

Chapter 4

Judging

Jim Dearman

Jim Dearman, native of Smithville, Tennessee, is the program director of the Gospel Broadcasting Network. A graduate of the University of Tennessee with a degree in communications, he also attended Memphis School of Preaching and earned his Master's from Alabama Christian School of Religion, now Southern Christian University. He has preached for thirty years, serving as a located preacher in Alabama, Tennessee, and Texas. He also directed the Malaysia School of Preaching and, on returning from the mission field, taught at the Memphis School of Preaching.

With a background in radio and television broadcasting, Jim began the Sound Words radio program in 1976; and it later expanded and became the Truth for the World media missions work, for which he served as director of broadcasting. He still participates as a speaker for Truth for the World radio and television.

The Dearman family currently consists of Jim, Janis, and son, Sam, who works with Gospel Broadcasting Network as an editor. Jim and Janis, also, have two older daughters and nine grandchildren. Their older daughter, Courtney, is married to Kevin Ruiz, evangelist for the Fleetwood Church of Christ, Houston, Texas. There are four Ruiz children: daughters, Cassidy, ten; Jessica, eight; Lindsay, six; and son, Chase, three. The Dearmans' younger daughter, Tiffany, editor of the **Steele Enterprise** newspaper, Steele, Missouri, is married to Keith Pritchard. Members at Steele Church of Christ, they are parents of five children: sons, Alan, soon to enter the Air Force, and Caleb and Christopher, fifteen-year-old identical twins; Seth, nine; and daughter, Emily, age seven.

In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus clearly taught that all those who have ever lived will stand before Him in judgment. The One who came to earth as Savior will sit on the throne of His glory to judge in the last day. This, the fundamental teaching of Jesus on judging, should sober the thinking of every person alive today.

In the text referenced above, Jesus established that both heaven and hell are eternal destinations, one for the righteous and the other for the unrighteous. Jesus, while on earth, revealed the standard by which all will be judged: "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My

words, has that which judges him. The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48, NKJV).

With both the fact and standard of the final judgment established, the remainder of this lesson will explore whether or not there is any judgment in which men are to be engaged, prior to their being judged by the Lord on that great and final judgment day. Is it the case that we are to avoid all judging of one another in this life? Is there any kind of judging that is required of men by God? If so, what is it? The New Testament answers to these questions must be understood and applied if we expect to hear "well done" from the final Judge of all mankind.

All of us understand that what Jesus taught on judging, or any other subject, is not confined to the words in red in the New Testament. While some have placed greater emphasis on what Jesus actually taught while among men, Jesus made clear that the Holy Spirit would reveal all truth after His return to the Father (John 16:13; John 14:26). The Spirit has completed that work, and we have in our possession, in its entirety, the powerful and penetrating sword of the Spirit, the word of God. The New Testament is the teaching of Jesus, both that which He personally taught among men and that which He revealed through the Spirit to the inspired writers. The main thrust of this lesson, however, will be to examine the teaching Jesus did personally on this important subject, with special emphasis on one text, Matthew 7:1-6. Here, as part of the great Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught the following about judging:

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me remove the speck from your

eye"; and look, a plank *is* in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

The above passage is one of the most misunderstood and misapplied texts in the New Testament. The statement, "Judge not, that you be not judged," has been taken out of its immediate context and used to argue against any form of judgment by men of other men. If one carefully examines the entire context, one concludes correctly that the Lord allows for judgment of some kind here. Also, when one examines the whole of the New Testament, it becomes clear that not all judging is condemned, but that, in fact, some judging is commanded. The words of Jesus recorded by the apostle John, in John 7:24, settle this point. There Jesus declared: "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

The teaching of Jesus was never contradictory; therefore, when He said, "Judge not, that you be not judged," He could not have been prohibiting all judgment by men of other men. This would contradict His teaching in John 7:24. Thus, we must ask: "What type of judgment is prohibited in Matthew 7:1?" Before discussing what is prohibited by the Lord's statement in Matthew 7:1, let us first see what types of judgment could not be included in the Lord's prohibition in this passage.

In Matthew 7:1, Jesus could not have been prohibiting judgment by civil courts, because the New Testament upholds the right of the law of the land to judge a person. In Titus 3:1, Paul instructed Titus: "Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for

every good work." Then, in Romans 13:1-5, the same inspired writer admonished every Christian to be submissive to governmental authority:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake (Romans 13:1-5).

These passages, and others that could be cited, clearly demonstrate the New Testament's sanction of civil government and the Christian's responsibility to submit to it, when doing so does not require one to violate the law of God (Acts 5:29).

Another area of judgment the Lord could not have been prohibiting in Matthew 7:1 is the judgment by the church upon those who walk disorderly. Several passages may be cited to prove this point, but we will include only three of them in this study.

Matthew 18:15-17 describes a judging process involving those in the church. The Lord said:

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more,

that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Who could deny that this process involves making judgments about another person's actions? When a brother or sister in Christ sins against another, the offended brother or sister is to bring the matter to the offender's attention; and, if no repentance is forthcoming, the further instructions from the Lord are to be followed. If repentance is finally shown, forgiveness is to follow. However, if there is no repentance, the process ends in a withdrawal of fellowship from the wayward member, in the hope that this ultimate act of loving discipline will bring the sinner to his spiritual senses.

This teaching of Jesus while on earth is reinforced following His return to heaven. Paul would later instruct the church at Thessalonica: "But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us" (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Paul further instructed: "And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother" (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

Then, in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul instructed the church to withdraw from the brother living with his father's wife, a command that clearly involved judgment on the part of the church toward the sinning brother. In the second Corinthian epistle, Paul indicated that the action resulted in the brother's return and that the church should now forgive him and restore him to their fellowship. The three passages cited here demonstrate that judgment on the part of the church toward wayward members is not only

permissible, but that it is necessary for the church to be "obedient in all things."

Now, a third prohibition that could not have been in the mind of Jesus in His teaching in Matthew 7 is the private judgment concerning those who sin. Later, in this same sermon, Jesus taught: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?" (Matthew 7:15-16). The apostle John charged Christians to "...test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

In the immediate context of Matthew 7, there is an admonition in verse 6 that, if followed faithfully, requires judgment. The Lord tells His disciples not to cast their pearls before dogs and swine. Is judgment not required if one is to determine who fits the "dog and swine" description given here by the Lord? There can be no doubt, then, that the New Testament condones judgment in the civil courts, in the church where wayward members are concerned, and private judgments concerning those who, by their fruits, show they are sinning against God. These are all examples of the "righteous judgment" the Lord authorized in John 7:24. What kind of judging, then, is the Lord prohibiting in Matthew 7:1?

It is consistent with the whole of New Testament teaching to say that Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, was prohibiting the unkind, unmerciful, and unfair judgment of others. Such judgment would include the speculations about another person's motives, the thoughts of the heart that cannot be seen by men, but that will be revealed by the Lord in the final judgment. The judgment Jesus prohibits is the type to which James refers in James 2:13, where he writes: "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13). A merciful and forgiving spirit is

to characterize those who follow Christ. When it becomes necessary for a Christian to rebuke sin in others, he must see himself as one who will stand in need of mercy at the final judgment.

Paul, in Romans 14, also discusses a type of judging that would certainly be included in the prohibition of Jesus in Matthew 7. In matters of conscience, where a brother may have a conviction concerning matters of indifference, such as the eating of certain meats, as Paul describes in this chapter, the brother should not be judged or held in contempt by other brethren. He should be allowed to follow his conviction in these matters, as long as he is not pressing his convictions upon others to cause division in the body. Christians should be considerate and compassionate toward one another and should never demonstrate spiritual arrogance in their relationships. Paul's discussion in Romans 14 is further proof that the New Testament does not prohibit all judging, but regulates and restricts it. With this principle in mind, in the remainder of this study, let us examine the Lord's teaching in Matthew 7:1-6 in more detail.

In the latter part of verse one, Jesus points out that the harsh, hypercritical, and hypocritical judging included in the first part of the verse will reap a bitter harvest for the one guilty of such judgment. The Lord expands that thought in verse two, where he explains that men usually receive from others the judgment they are so quick to execute themselves. One reaps what one sows, not only from others in this life, but also in the final judgment. Included in the Lord's meaning here must be the thought of the final judgment of God. Jesus teaches here that censorious criticism of others is sin that will confront and condemn the impenitent in the final judgment.

Think of the attitudes of many of the Jews in the first century. They despised the Samaritans and looked down on the publicans and sinners. In Luke 18, the Lord

depicted the Pharisee as one who thanked God that he was not like the poor publican. He prided himself in perpetual prayer life, but the Lord made it clear that unless there is faithfulness in life leading to fervency in prayer, the frequency avails nothing. Thus, the publican, who would not even lift his eyes toward heaven, but who cried for mercy, left the temple justified while the Pharisee was still in his sins.

Jesus began this Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 with the beatitudes. Think of how the application of these great truths to one's life would keep one from the kind of judging Jesus condemned. The poor in spirit recognize their undone condition and mourn over the sin that separates them from God. They then seek the comfort that comes from forgiveness through obedience to the gospel. From that time forward, they walk meekly in their Master's steps, eagerly eating the bread and drinking the water of life through the Word. As peacemakers, they manifest the spirit of Christ, striving to live peaceably with all men, but not at the expense of truth. They will be compassionate, but without compromise in their dealings with others, and they will rejoice even when persecuted by those who resent their efforts to lead them to the truth. These are the truly blessed disciples of Christ, who will not be characterized by harsh and unjust criticism of others, in violation of the Lord's teaching.

In verses 3-5 of Matthew 7, Jesus illustrates the wrong kind of judging, of which His disciples should not be guilty. He speaks of a man with a plank in his eye seeking to remove a speck in his brother's eye. A modern proverbial equivalent to the Lord's statement here would be the familiar expression: "People in glass houses should not throw stones." Jesus is calling for constant self-examination that should prevent us from becoming hypocritical and hypercritical in our relationships with others.

Chapter 4: Judging

To remove a speck from someone's eye requires clear vision and a careful approach, because eyesight is precious. However, seeking to correct spiritual vision in the far more precious soul of another must be done with humility by one whose influence is not hampered by hypocrisy. Paul reinforced the teaching of Jesus in this regard when he wrote: "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Galatians 6:1-4).

Paul's writing here is in perfect harmony with the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 7: 3-5. Jesus did not say that one should never correct his brother; in fact, He taught the opposite here and elsewhere. In Luke 17:3, for example, Jesus said: "Take heed to yourselves; if your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him." Likewise, here in Matthew 7:5, Jesus calls upon the hypocrite to first remove the sin from his life, in order to be consistent in his efforts to correct his brother.

The final statement from Jesus on judging in this context is in Matthew 7:6, a verse that further demands discernment, or judgment, in dealing with others. Jesus says there are those who will despise the doctrine of Christ and the disciple who imparts it. While the gospel is to be preached to every creature, it is evident that some will not accept the message and will, in fact, abuse the messenger. When such people are encountered, the Christian must shake the dust from his feet and move on to fertile soil. Such decisions require the righteous judgment of which Jesus spoke in John 7:24.

In Acts 13:46, we have an example of this during Paul's first missionary journey. To the "contradicting and

blaspheming” Jews in Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas declared boldly: “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.” Paul and Barnabas issued righteous judgment upon those who had judged themselves unworthy of the gospel by their actions.

In giving the limited commission, Jesus gave His disciples some “judging” instructions concerning certain individuals they would encounter:

Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city! (Matthew 10:11-15).

At the outset of this study, it was stated that Matthew 7:1 is a verse that is misunderstood and misapplied by many. However, what Jesus taught about judging is not difficult to understand. Perhaps the misunderstanding arises from the desire of many to avoid any kind of confrontation with others, or from others. Therefore, they adopt a “live and let live” approach and seek an endorsement from Jesus for their mindset through their prejudicial view of Matthew 7:1-6. However, the proper, fair-minded approach to the study of the New Testament will lead one to the proper conclusion concerning judging.

Yes, it is true that Jesus will be the final judge of all mankind. Jesus so taught in Matthew 25:31-46; and Paul, by inspiration, reaffirmed this truth in Acts 17:30-31:

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Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.

God, through Jesus, is the final judge; and Jesus, in John 12:48, revealed that His word will be the standard of judgment.

Meanwhile, the faithful who await their appearance before the judge of all mankind must proclaim the perfect law of liberty. To do so requires the Christian to render righteous judgment and to refrain from unrighteous judgment. Through His teaching, the final judge has made it possible for the honest seeker to distinguish between the two.

To an old classmate
and good brother—
Jim Dearman

Chapter 5
Wolves in Sheep's Clothing
Bill Haywood

Bill is married to Teresa and they have two sons, Tim and Steve. Since 1996, the Haywood family has served with the Lord's church in Abingdon, Virginia.

The subject before us is "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing." In Matthew 7:15, our Lord begins the discussion with these words, "Beware of false prophets." Even if we have no idea what it means to say that a person is a false prophet, the Lord's simple warning should compel us to find out more. If we are not aware that there is imminent danger associated with false prophets, our reverence for our Lord demands that we respect His call of warning.

I begin with the above comments because it seems that there are those who are completely oblivious to the dangers associated with false teachers. As we will see in our text, a false teacher is one that promotes a doctrine and/or behavior that will cost one their soul.

Our Lord said:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 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. 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? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matthew 7:15-23)

Within this text there are several things that merit our most serious consideration.

There Is An Absolute Standard

Something worth noting here is that for there to be false prophets or false teachers there has to be a false message or false teaching. Hence, there must also be a true message. Some have concluded that truth is relative; hence, a search for truth is an exercise in futility. Jesus' teaching in this text refutes that thought. Jesus clearly teaches that we can know truth (John 8:32) and that we can therefore distinguish between true and false teachers.

Some would have you believe that one doctrine is as good as another doctrine. Many find it the pinnacle of arrogance to suggest that some religious groups actually teach error that will cost one his soul. Jesus' teaching in this text refutes the idea that it is arrogant to recognize and identify. Some would have you believe that as long as a person is sincere in what he teaches, it is all right. Again, Jesus' teaching in this text refutes that concept. Some would also have us believe that we should not concern ourselves with false teachers. *"Live and let live."* Once more; Jesus' teaching in this text refutes that notion. Not only is discerning false teachers important, it is our duty! In view of this, let's carefully examine the teaching of Jesus in this text on the subject of false teachers.

The Danger Of False Teachers

In the text before us, Jesus teaches on the danger of a false teacher. Notice that in verse 15 Jesus says that, "inwardly they are ravening wolves." For sure, some of these false teachers are deliberately setting out to subvert the faith of many. In Titus 1:11, Paul refers to those who have terrible motives when he writes, "Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake."

Some false teachers may not have evil motives. Their motives may be to actually accomplish what is good and right. However, a good motive does not negate the danger of false teaching. Remember in verse 21 of our text Jesus said, "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."

If we believe that there is absolute, knowable truth that must be obeyed to attain salvation, we must guard against error. This is why Paul would warn the Ephesian elders, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29).

A false teacher in the midst of the saints must never be ignored or allowed to spread his venomous teaching. If tolerated long enough a false teacher will do violence to the church. Whether that is their motive or not, false teaching will not promote the will of God.

The Appearance Of A False Teacher

Jesus teaches us that the appearance of a false teacher is deceptive. In verse 15, Jesus teaches that the false teacher will "come to you in sheep's clothing." An appropriate question at this point would be, "What does a false teacher look like?" What version or translation of the Bible does a

false teacher use? From which schools do false teachers come? Does a false teacher have a certain height and weight? What does a false teacher look like and act like?

We have examples right here in this room of what a false teacher looks like. A false teacher can be a person from one of our faithful schools. He can be one who uses a reliable translation of the Bible. He can even be one who teaches a lot of truth.

You see a false teacher does not wear a neon sign that says, **"I AM A FALSE TEACHER."** A false teacher looks like one of the faithful saints. He knows how to walk the walk and talk the talk.

How To Discern Who Is A False Teacher

Jesus does not expect us to approach this subject with guesswork. He teaches us how to discern who is a false teacher. I heard about a sincere brother who once defended a false teacher because when he asked this particular teacher, "Are you a false teacher?" the man replied, "NO." That kind of test is no test!

In verse 16, Jesus teaches "Ye shall know them by their fruits." Sometimes false teachers deceive us because they seem so genuine. Some may be sincere while others may in fact be a complete fake. But the fact is we cannot judge a man's motives, or for that matter, we really cannot be sure what a man's motives are. Hence, the test is the fruit test. What are they teaching and what are they producing?

We only have one objective standard. There are some who would have us believe that we could never ascertain whether a person was a false teacher or not, because they claim that all truth is relative. Jesus certainly does not teach any such thing. When I listen to some preachers, I get the impression that they think the only false teaching is to say that there is false teaching.

Consider what Jesus said about false teaching:
Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit;
but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A
good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can
a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit...Wherefore
by their fruits ye shall know them. (Matthew
7:17,18,20)

I know very little about fruit trees. If you were to show me the bark of several trees and ask me, "From which came apples?" I could not tell you. Or if you showed me various leaves and ask me, "Which one belongs to an apple tree?" I could not tell you. But if you showed me various fruit and said, "Which one is an apple?" I could handle that! The fruit of false teaching is easy to spot.

One of the most rampant and grievous forms of false doctrines says that the Bible is not authoritative. People who refuse to recognize the authority of Christ's Word, the Bible, fall into the antichrist category. In 1 John 4:3, John discusses the spirit of antichrist and in 1 John 4:6, he states, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." Did you catch what he said? "He that is not of God heareth not us." The antichrist does not respect apostolic authority! My, my, so many fall into that category!

Another fruit of false teaching that is easy to spot is those who teach that baptism is not essential to salvation. The Bible is saturated with Scripture that points to the essential nature of baptism. Passages such as: Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:1-5; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21 and a host of other passages. The Lord plainly says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." To argue that point is to argue with Jesus! Count on this, Jesus will always be

right and those who argue with Him will always be false teachers.

The fruit of false teaching does not come from a noble source. I have some worthless weeds that grow up between my fence and my neighbor's fence. I have never expected to harvest anything worthwhile from those weeds. When you find a teaching that is absolutely contrary to God's word, don't think that it came from a noble source.

Hidden Characteristics Of A False Teacher

We cannot know what is in the heart of a man, but Jesus can and does know. Hence, our Savior teaches on the hidden characteristics of a false teacher.

Jesus teaches in verses 15 and 22 that they appear to be very religious. Sometimes a false teacher will seem so spiritually minded, people will often defend them because they are so spiritual! Again, remember we are fruit inspectors!

Paul tells us that a false teacher is interested in self-promotion. Consider Acts 20:30, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." We need to be suspect of self-promoters. Sometimes one will promote himself by trying to tear down a perceived leader. The thinking seems to be if I can tear down this big name preacher, I'll show how tough and "SOUND" I am. They conquer and destroy a paper dragon while the real false teachers still ravage the flock.

A false teacher has several characteristics that can be concealed. Consider 2 Timothy 3:1-7:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful,

unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

A false teacher doesn't like an abundance of religion. A false teacher is one that has perverted the truth. A false teacher is one that promotes a doctrine that will cost one his soul!

The Destiny Of A False Teacher

When asked, "What will happen to false teachers?" we may hesitate with uncertainty. The Lord doesn't flinch! Jesus leaves no ambiguity on the destiny of false teachers. In verse 19, He states, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." There is no haziness there!

God demands that His servants be fruitful. Jesus said:

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit... If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. (John 15:2,6)

If you have a tree that is supposed to bear fruit but it does not bear fruit, you do away with it. It is important to

note that God determines what is fruitful and what is not fruitful. Man may think being fruitful is an appearance of religion. Paul wrote that these types of people are those that "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" and that "from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:5).

In verses 21 and 22, Jesus makes it clear that mere appearance of religion is not enough. Jesus said:

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. 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?

Jesus demands obedience! "He that doeth the will of my Father." This is why false teaching is so dangerous. Any teaching that does not lead to correct obedience will lead one away from God.

Some may be certain that their way is the right way. Jesus indicates that some may even argue with God on the judgment day. In verse 23, we see the terrible fate of all the disobedient, including false teachers: "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." There certainly is a standard, and God will hold us accountable to that standard. We must be certain that we are upholding the truth because it is an issue of spiritual life and death.

As a mature Christian, I should be able to discern the true from the false. The apostle Paul wrote:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and

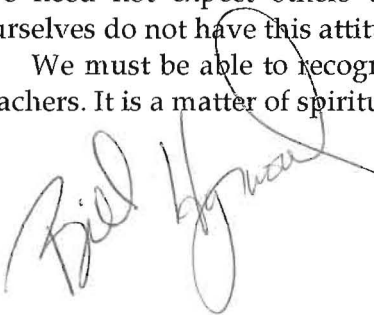
cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive... (Ephesians 4:13,14)

We need to have the attitude of Apollos. In Acts 18, we find this account:

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ. (Acts 18:24-28)

Often on the Arise To Truth radio program, the speakers will say, "If we are wrong, please show us and help us to see the truth." If a person corrects me and helps me to serve God more accurately, that person is my friend. We need not expect others to have this attitude if we ourselves do not have this attitude.

We must be able to recognize false teaching and false teachers. It is a matter of spiritual life and death.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bill Haywood". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "B".

Chapter 6
The New Birth
Jimmy Canup

Jimmy Canup was baptized in May 1965 by Dick Milton in High Point, NC. He began part time preaching at Cottage Grove Avenue church in Greensboro, NC and Corinth church in Woodleaf, NC. He accepted full time work with the Florida Street church in Greensboro, NC in June of 1967. He has preached full time since 1967 with churches in North Carolina, Kentucky, and Virginia. Presently located with the Fries Church of Christ in Fries, VA.

He is married to the former Mary Bartlett of Galax, VA. They have five children, seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. Five children and six grandchildren are faithful member of the church.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there have been numerous books that have been written concerning the subject of the "New Birth." Almost without exception, these books have been written in an attempt to change or to deny what Jesus taught is necessary in order for one to experience the "New Birth." A great number of these books attempt to make the subject so mysterious and so complicated that one must be a college professor to understand it. Through these books, television and radio sermons, denominational preachers emphatically deny that John 3:1-5 has anything whatsoever to do with baptism.

Jesus used the ordinary things of life that surrounded Him to teach spiritual lessons concerning the coming kingdom and the obtaining of entrance into it. This is the case with the "New Birth." Nicodemus had a great difficulty in distinguishing between the physical and the spiritual; this is evident by his reference to the possibility of entering his

mother's womb and being physically born a second time.

Jesus made the "New Birth" essential for entering into the kingdom of heaven. If we claim belief in Jesus, then we will come to an accurate conclusion as to what it means to be born again. We can speculate and guess as to what it means, but we must turn to God's Word in order to arrive at an accurate conclusion. If Jesus taught it, we can know that God endorsed it, for Jesus said, "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me" (John 7:16).

NICODEMUS AND THE NEW BIRTH

Nicodemus is considered to be a religious person, being a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. Jesus' miracles had come to his attention and he acknowledged that what Jesus was doing was under the authority of God. Why he came to Jesus at night is unknown, and any explanation is but a guess and assumption. He was honest and curious enough to be concerned about what God was doing through this individual known as Jesus. Did he believe in Jesus? Undoubtedly! Regardless, Jesus knew this man's heart and his reason for coming, and as always, Jesus addressed this man in the perfect manner. In responding to Nicodemus, Jesus goes straight to the heart of the matter, which was Nicodemus' spiritual need. Nicodemus' mind was centered only on those things of a physical nature as he asks Jesus, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (John 3:4).

Jesus does not hesitate to address the spiritual aspect of what He had said in verse three as He states in verse five, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The word "except" which Jesus used is *ean...me* and means "if not." Thus the necessity of being born "of water and of the Spirit" stands between any person and the kingdom of God. "If not" is the same as saying, "unless you have..." Therefore, Jesus was saying that without the "New Birth" it is impossible to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

In order for there to be a birth, either in the physical or spiritual realm, necessity demands there must first be a conception. Conception is followed by the birth or bringing forth. The human father is responsible in the physical realm for the conception. In the spiritual realm, the Holy Spirit is the one who accomplishes the conception. The Holy Spirit has an instrument by which He accomplishes the conception process. Paul wrote, "...for in Christ Jesus I have **begotten you through the Gospel**" (I Corinthians 4:15b). James wrote, "Of His {God's - jrc} own will begat he us with the word of truth..." (James 1:18). Peter wrote, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: **Being born again** {or the "New Birth" - jrc}, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the word of God**, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Peter 1:22-23). There must be an acceptance of and obedience to the Spirit's instructions, which are revealed in the Word of God.

Conception in the physical realm involves both male and female, and so it is in the spiritual realm. The male gender is the Holy Spirit. In John 16:13, we read, "Howbeit, when **HE**, the Spirit of truth, is come..." The female gender is the water: Jonah 1:15, "So they took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from **HER** raging."

Conception is followed by the birth process. At the time of birth, a baby comes into the world to experience a new physical life. At the point of the "New Birth," a person comes forth to a new spiritual life in Christ. Again, Peter wrote, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Peter 2:2). Paul said in II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Paul gives an explanation when this new life begins: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

This new life in Christ has several aspects to it. The individual puts on a new name; the name Christian (cf. Acts 26:11). They have a new food (cf. I Peter 2:2). They wear new clothing; the robes of righteousness (cf. Colossians 3:10-15).

In John 3:8, Jesus says, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." This verse is often misused by denominational preachers to teach that the "New Birth" is so mysterious that no person

can possibly understand it. This is a false application of this passage. What Jesus intended here was, just like we cannot see the wind, but we can see the results of the wind, so it is with a person who has been born again. The person does not display any outward, physical change; in other words, they still look the same. The change is one that comes about inwardly. Through faith, repentance, confession of faith, and baptism into Christ, the person submitting in obedience to the gospel experiences the change in their life which inwardly makes a new person. The change a person demonstrates outwardly is by their actions. "The New Birth" does not change the color of the hair, the eyes, the skin, etc. When you look upon them, you still see the same individual. However, there will be an evident change in the behavior as the individual strives to be more and more like Christ. They attempt to live as the apostle Paul said he did: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me..." (Galatians 2:20). As a new Christian the old sinful habits and practices, which previously were a part of their life, are no longer seen.

THE "WATER" OF JOHN 3:5

There are many who deny that the "water" used in John 3:5 is literal water (H₂O) and have unsuccessfully tried to make it mean something else. They have attributed its meaning to everything, even to mean the physical birth. However, Jesus corrected Nicodemus when he tried to apply the "New Birth" in a physical sense (cf. John 3:3-4). What then does the "water" of John 3:5 mean?

The account of Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus about "being born of **water** and of the Spirit" is sandwiched between two other accounts, which involve the same word, "**water**." In John 2:1-10, at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, Jesus performed His first miracle by changing "**water**" into wine. Would any honest person seek to argue that the water Jesus changed into wine is something other than water? Then, in John 3:23, we are told that "John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much **water** there..." Into what was John baptizing people? To argue that water in John 3:5 means anything other than literal H₂O and that it is figuratively applied to the waters of baptism, is to incorrectly interpret and apply the Word of God. Such is to be dishonest with both the Word of God and with oneself.

No one has ever argued that in either of the aforementioned cases the word "**water**" could mean anything other than "**water**" (H₂O). Yet, when they come to the account of the "New Birth," all of a sudden the word "**water**" does not mean water; but rather, they have come up with an attempted explanation to deny the necessity of baptism for salvation. Regardless of how many or how often the denials may be as to the necessity of baptism for salvation, in the context of John 3:1-8, they will never change the Word of God.

CONCLUSION

Any honest person should be able to clearly see that the blood of Christ is what washes away our sins

Chapter 6: The New Birth

(Revelation 1:5), not the water itself. Lord Jesus shed His blood in His death on the cross (John 19:34). Paul clearly taught that we contact the shed blood of Christ by our obedience to the commandment to be baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3-4; also compare Colossians 2:12). Notice that we are "baptized **into** Christ," and Paul said that "**in** Christ" is where we are a "new creature" (II Corinthians 5:17). Therefore, one can safely reason from the Scriptures that in baptism is where one is "born again."

In Christian Love - To A
Brother in Christ that I
have come to love and respect
in our work together in the
Lord's Church

Jimmy R. Conroy

Chapter 7

Proper Christian Influence

R. D. McDaniel

R. D. McDaniel is a mathematics instructor at Rowan Cabarrus Community College in Salisbury, NC, and preaches for the Corinth church of Christ in Needmore, NC. He has been preaching at Corinth for the past ten years. Before this, R. D. preached as a fill-in preacher from time to time. After graduating from Freed-Hardeman College (1970) and Harding College (1972) with a BA in Mathematics and minor in Bible, he received his MS in Mathematics from Arkansas State University (1976). Since college days, he has taught mathematics six years in two Christian high schools, fifteen years in three universities, and for the past ten years in two community colleges. R. D. has participated in several gospel campaigns in door knocking and conducting Bible studies statewide and in Canada. R. D. is married to the former D'Lea Smith. They have two married daughters, Kyla Hall and Jenny Cline, who are each attending college.

I knew a miller who went from his work, his clothes covered with flour, to the post-office, and edged his way through the crowd. He left his mark on every one he touched. As Christians we should leave a mark for Christ on every one with whom we come in contact. —H. B. Gibbud. (Pittman, 166)

We must clearly understand what our influence has upon those we contact each day, from our own physical family, neighbors, friends, relatives, fellow Christians, and even total strangers!

The entire life of Jesus on this earth was one of influence! Even before He was born, the faithful of old were influenced by the Messianic promise of the Christ. Just think about these: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and many, many more. The Holy Spirit says it very well in Hebrews 11:13-16:

These all **died in faith**, not having received the promises, but **having seen them afar off**, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and

confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. (KJV)

This famous chapter eleven of Hebrews, known as "Heroes of Faith," is one that brings tremendous consolation, hope, and joy to all of God's faithful today. We should be encouraged to be even more faithful every day as we are influenced by these heroes of faith! Our motivation and desire for heaven must encourage us to keep on keeping on, daily growing in the faith!

What John, through the Holy Spirit, records for us speaks highly of the influence of Jesus Christ in John 20:30-31:

And *many other signs* truly did Jesus *in the presence of his disciples*, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that *ye might believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and *that believing ye might have life through his name*. (KJV)

There is so very much recorded for us in the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that it is astounding to consider the "*many other signs*" done by Jesus. Furthermore, consider the words given by the Spirit for the benefit of Cornelius' household as recorded by Luke in Acts 10:38:

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about

doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. (KJV)

Jesus, the master teacher, certainly left an influence for good. We should seek to be like Him, following His example (I Peter 2:21).

Thus, Jesus is qualified to teach of "influence". That is, the influence that Deity would desire to see of God's family—His church—today in the 21st Century. As Christians, we have no other choice than to realize the power of influence and the impossibility to rid ourselves of it. "Influence is ineradicable. None can dispossess themselves of this power. All that can be done is to direct it, for good or evil" (Pittman, page 163).

When we think of the teachings of Jesus on influence, we must realize that His entire purpose was that of seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10). He came down from heaven, "not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). Also, note the power and strength of His purpose as Jesus himself stated in John 4:34, "...my meat is to do the will..."

In this lesson, we hope to learn from the gospel accounts about some teachings of Jesus about "Proper Christian Influence." We shall begin with salt in **Matthew chapter five**, a portion of "The Sermon On The Mount."

First of all, SALT is used as an agent in the preservation of meats. Jesus speaks of salt in Matthew 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. (KJV)

"G. A. Smith, in his comments on the subject says, "The pickled fish of Galilee were known throughout the Roman World"" (Hunton, page 10). We all know that salt

preserves from corruption! This is common knowledge. Those of the first century who heard Jesus from the Mount definitely understood the challenge of being the “salt of the earth.” And we as His disciples today must also preserve the world from general corruption.

Paul writes of the importance of Christian salt in Colossians 4:6, “Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (KJV). Long before Paul’s time, salt was the most commonly used seasoning. Note Job 6:6, where Job asked, “Is tasteless food eaten without salt?” Or, as a little boy once defined salt as “the stuff that makes things taste bad when it is left out!”

In Paul’s day, salt was such a precious commodity that often it was traded for gold. To buy salt, Roman soldiers were paid an allowance or ‘salt money’ (the Latin *salarium*, from which our word ‘salary’ is derived). The first trade routes traversing Egypt, Greece, Italy and Spain were built for the purpose of transporting salt. (Eichman, page 15)

Just as salt is totally worthless and preserves no longer after it has lost its savor qualities, so are we as Christians when we cease to communicate the saving power of Jesus and His gospel (Romans 1:16). In Leviticus 2:13, we see that every meat offering was to be seasoned with salt. It was not to be left out! God’s word is always clear and says what it means and wants revealed to us. Oh, how people today need so very much to understand that precious concept!

You see this salt even signified the purity and fidelity required in the worship of God. Not only must this “seasoning” be extended in the worship of God, it also must be throughout our hearts and lives! “Only that which is connected with the rock, the soul that is in union

with Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit, can preserve its savor, and be instrumental of good to others" (Clark, 68).

Revelation 3:16: "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth," should be yelled from the housetops throughout America! Yes, in every city and on every hilltop, too. I want to please God! What about you? Salt that has lost its savor, "saltiness," is absolutely worthless to our Father God. In the Greek, this idea is that of "being foolish" or "to be rendered insipid" (Perschbacher, 280). In Romans 1:22, when referring to homosexuality, the translation of this phrase is rendered as "professing to be wise, they became fools." We absolutely must keep this influence quality finely tuned and running. Otherwise, we are most certainly setting ourselves up for displeasure in God's mind. He is not pleased with such nonsense from His family!

Excessive use of salt does not negate its necessity for human and animal physical need for sodium and chloride, which is in salt. Considering the value and necessity of salt, we easily have a need to be encouraged to be seasoned with salt. Noting these attributes of salt—salt saves, salt flavors, salt cleanses, salt de-ices, and salt operates internally—may help us to see the utmost importance of salt in our spiritual lives. We need it! God wants us to have it! And the world is lost without it! Think long and hard about this! Do you know what it means to not be pleasing to Deity? What a horrible thought!

If we utter words that are worthless, rash, unloving, and foul, how shall we reach people for Christ? They will not listen to us concerning salvation through Jesus, or concerning anything else for that matter. If we belong to Christ, our words are thoughtful, wholesome, and tasteful. They are not flat and dull, for they have flavor!

Chapter 7: Proper Christian Influence

Elisha threw salt into the Jericho spring to cleanse it (2 Kings 2:20-22). The Israelites used salt to bathe newborn babies (Ezekiel 16:4), and this custom continues in some regions of the world today. Our speech needs to be cleansed as well. God cannot be pleased with a dirty mouth. (Eichman, page 16)

Kind words are “de-icers” to hard hearts. Just as salt works from the inside, so our speech must be controlled from within to be most effective and true to God! May God help us be and to remain “the salt of the earth” which is so greatly needed today.

Now, let us continue with the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:14-16:

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 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. **Let your light so shine before men,** that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (KJV)

Clearly, Jesus declares that we are “the light of the world.” The Greek word translated “giveth light” in Matthew 5:15 has the meaning of “to shine, give light” and this word comes from a root word meaning “splendid, magnificent, sumptuous” and “brightness” (Perschbacher, 254). This magnificence is God’s strong desire for each of His children to obtain maturity by his godly life and shining manner of example and teaching of God’s way! Now this indeed is an influence! This is how God uses us in His gospel dynamite to save the lost (Romans 1:16). Thus, our light dispels darkness, ignorance, prejudice, and unrighteousness. Our light must reflect the light of Jesus.

I really like the way that Paul Hunton describes this, when he says:

Christians, disciples of Christ, are the means of diffusing the light of life to a world darkened by crime, vice, sin, war. It is through the life of a Christian that God chooses to illuminate the minds of men spiritually, as He chooses to enlighten the world, materially, with the sun. It is a shame that Christians let their reflectors get rusty and dirty, either by lack of godly exercise, or by living shady lives, or because of both." (Hunton, page 10)

Is that not good?

Paul writes to the Thessalonians in chapter 5 of the first letter in a very strong contrasting style, that I believe clearly shows what Jesus speaks of our being "a light unto the world"! Here Paul contrasts "sons of the light" to darkness, "sons of the day" to night, those that are "awake" to asleep, and those who are "sober" to drunk! Note Paul's admonition in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (KJV).

The obtaining of salvation is what we seek; not that of wrath, which results from living in the darkness of the world, following after Satan. The Christian's light is "to shine"! This shining is not to be of force or because we "have to," but it must be naturally, unavoidably. It is giving the glory to God. This requires us not to give the praise and glory to oneself. That light, which we are to reflect, is the LIGHT of JESUS (John 8:12). He is the light!

We must ever be aware of our example of light—for that is what we are as Christians! Amen! We would be better off to have never been born than to mislead or to cause one to stumble. Note Luke 17:1-2:

Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe *unto him*, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. (KJV)

When we meditate upon Psalms 119, we cannot help but to notice David's attitude toward God's law. And, in verse 105 he strongly says; "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." We must see the importance of being reflectors of that light—the Word, Jesus—to a lost world! Is that not right?

There is a tremendous need today in 2005 for a strong church—the Lord's church—to realize that without Jesus we are nothing (John 15:5). Yes, without Jesus we would have very little, if any, influence upon the world. But, with Jesus in our lives we can do all things (Philippians 4:13). Casandra Martin says it like this: "When we look into the mirror of scripture however, we can see so much more. Our God surrounds us, embraces us, lifts us up, and resides in our hearts. We are not alone. Through His grace and power He longs to use you for His glory" (Martin, page 22).

We must never hide our light. Has your electrical power ever gone off at your house on a dark, dark night during a storm? And then someone lights a candle and immediately puts a basket over it! This would not help the situation at all. Neither can we cover the "light" of Jesus to a lost and dying world! We must do our job and let HIS light shine through us—in our actions, in our words, in our thoughts, in our examples, and in our influence to those with whom we come in contact!

Always and forever in HIM be the praise and the glory.

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Best Wishes
R D McDaniel

Chapter 8
The Cost & Demands of Discipleship
Michael Jordan

Michael Jordan was born in Texas. He finished high school in Memphis, TN in 1973. He attended Memphis School Of Preaching from 1973-1975, Freed-Hardeman College from 1975-1976. Other educational background includes Magnolia Bible College in Mississippi, Itawamba Community College, Northeast Mississippi Junior College, Northwest Mississippi Junior College, Southern Christian University where he received his B.A. in 1997.

He began full-time preaching in 1992 and has preached in Mississippi and North Carolina. He is currently laboring with the South Stokes congregation in King, NC, where he has been since 1996. He married Jewel (formerly Attebury) in 1977. They adopted 2 children in 1994, Deborah and William. Deborah is married and lives in Mississippi. He has one granddaughter. Has conducted Gospel Meetings and Lectureships in MS, VA, NC & SC.

I am appreciative to Tim and the men at West Jefferson for the invitation to present a portion of God's Word to you today. It seems that the subjects are getting more timely and important to us as speakers and to you as listeners. We are living in a changing world and have you noticed how many different things people are coming up with to get around what the Lord wants us to do and how He wants us to be?

As I was looking for information concerning this subject throughout God's word, and even in the sermon books I have collected over the years, I could not help but refer back to Revelation 21:7, "He that overcometh shall inherit these things and I will be his God and he shall be my son." Well, what things will we inherit? Those things talked about previously; the new city, being with God, no more tears, no more pain, no more suffering. Then this song popped into my mind. I've been singing this song for years: "Heaven Will Surely Be Worth It All." Everything that I'm going through in this life, its toils, its strife, its pains, its tears, its heartaches and its disappointments, will

all pass away. For you see, if I'm a member of the Lord's church, we are talking about the church we read about in God's word. If I'm a New Testament Christian, all this will soon pass. It will make heaven worth every tear that was shed, every disappointment, every pain, every heartache that we ever shared. For you see, we sing a song, "We're part of the family that's on its way home." For those of us who have been obedient through water baptism, become a New Testament Christian, we can sing these songs and have this confidence that heaven will surely be worth it all.

As I was preparing this manuscript for the book, I was looking at the subject and could not help but ask myself the question concerning the "cost of discipleship," what is in it for me? I can, beyond a shadow of a doubt, with every fiber of my being, every bit of boldness or confidence that I have within me, say, "Yes, it will be worth it." I want to remind us about both the cost and the rewards of discipleship. Now, if heaven is going to be worth it all, there is something we are going to have to do, don't you think? So as we think about heaven being worth it all, let's think about the cost of discipleship. What is the cost of discipleship?

Well, discipleship is not only learning but it is more of a lifestyle. It is a life that we live. It is following Christ. But the problem is we usually don't get our priorities straight. Think about what is said in Luke 9:23-24, "Jesus said to all those who were listening to him, 'If any man would come after me...'" Watch this, He gives you the priority here of what you should do to follow Him, He said: (1) "deny yourself," (2) "take up your cross daily," and (3) "follow Him." Now that's hard to do, isn't it? But He continues, "...whosoever shall save his life shall lose it and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake the very same one shall save it." It might sound confusing. We have to put God first in our life; not second, not third, not

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whenever we feel like it. He must be number one in our life. There can be no other above Him.

I love my wife. I love her with every fiber of my being, but she is second in my life. God is number one. I know that she loves me with every fiber of her being, but I come second. God is first. My point is God should be first in our lives. But how many times, think about it, now this is going to be hard for us, do we put our family before God? Remember what He said in verse 24, "For whosoever shall save his life," that is, when I'm only thinking about my family and myself, I'm not putting God first. That person who saves his life on earth is going to lose his life in the hereafter. But if this person will deny himself, take up his cross and follow Christ, then he'll lose his life. He may not have many friends here an earth, but he'll reap everlasting joy, and heaven will surely be worth it all. Don't you think? You see, Jesus said in Luke 14:26, "If any man come unto me and hateth not his own father, mother, wife, children, brethren and sisters and even himself, he cannot {underline that word} be my disciple." Why? The Lord is not coming first in our lives, He is second, third, forth, or "whenever I have time for you Lord."

In order for us to understand the cost of discipleship, not only is Jesus to come first, everything in this world should really come dead last. Why should I want to invest in something that's going to be destroyed? Look at what Jesus said in Luke 9:25, "What shall it profit a man?" You know the rest of this verse, don't you? But look at it. "What shall it profit a man if he will gain the whole world and forfeit {there's another word for lose} his own soul?" We understand this word forfeit. When you have two sports teams scheduled to play on a certain day and one team doesn't show up because they have something else more important to do, they forfeit the game. There is no way they can win.

Now let's look at it spiritually. If we put anything above God there's no way we will gain or inherit heaven. That's what the Scripture says. But now Jesus said in Luke 14:33, "So therefore whosoever of you that renounceth not all that he hath cannot be my disciple." I have to say, "None of this influences me, none of this impresses. The Lord is number one in my life." We can understand this.

We can deal with this for a period of time, but when it comes down to suffering for Christ, oh yes, this is part of the cost of being a disciple; we have a hard time suffering for Christ. Let's go back to Luke 14:27. He basically says we must be willing to bear our own cross. What about where it says we must bear one another's burdens? That's right. But you see, I cannot help you bear your burdens unless you bear them first yourself and do all you can do and then you need help.

Those of you who have worked out in the weight room, you know what a spotter is. That spotter isn't going to say, "Okay, let's lift some weights," and the spotter reaches down and lifts those weights and you say, "This is easy." That spotter may be able to lift 500 lbs. You go home and say "I lifted 500 lbs today!" We know something is wrong. That spotter is there knowing that once you lift that weight as much as you can instead of letting it fall and hurt you, he reaches down and he will say, "Okay, let's get it on up." That's where we come in. That's where Christ comes in. Christ is not going to do for us, unless we do for ourselves. Yes, He died for us. There's grace, mercy, love, peace, all of this, but until we learn to follow Him and obey His commands, He's never going to say, "Michael, I'm going to be there when you fall." You see, a lot of times we try to keep people from falling. Listen, you can have a lot of good education, but where you really become smart is learning from your failures. You know what makes a Christian strong? Learning what we did wrong, overcoming it, making it

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right and moving on. Not sitting back and sulking about what we have not done; that causes us to suffer physically and emotionally. That can cause us physical stress and damage.

Peter said in I Peter 4:12, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trials that are among you which cometh upon you to prove you {that's another word for test} as though a strange thing happened to you." It doesn't just happen because it happened. There is a reason for it. Peter went on to say in verse 13, "But insomuch as you are partakers of Christ's suffering, rejoice." Peter said in verse 16, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." Remember what Jesus said, "Blessed are you when men shall persecute you and revile you for my name's sake." This is what Peter is talking about. He said that at the revelation of His glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy. You see, living an ungodly life is not going to profit us anything. Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 3:12, that God wants all to live godly in Christ Jesus and those that do are going to suffer persecution.

Now I realize when he wrote this that they were going to be persecuted by being thrown to the lions. We're not persecuted that way today. But when we stand up for Christ, people make fun of us, "Oh, you think you're the only ones going to heaven." "No, only those who obey God's commands are going to heaven." The world doesn't understand what the church is all about. Think about personal weaknesses, other things we must endure, for the cause of Christ. Remember, Paul said in I Corinthians 9:27 that he buffeted his body. Now when you think about "buffeted," there are two ways you can look at that. Buffeted actually means to bring under control. That literally means to beat upon one's self; self discipline. And yet we can buffet something by making it shine. Did you realize that? We're supposed to shine in the world. Remember that Jesus said in Matthew 5, that we are the

light of the world, a city that sits on a hill that cannot be hid, that men may see your good works and glorify your Father. You see, we are supposed to shine. People should see Christ living in us. Yet we have the attitude that I'm weak, I can't do it. You've heard the phrase, "Can't never could do anything." Maybe you know the rest of the phrase. We can't do things if we don't try.

What about our unwillingness to serve other people when we have extra burdens upon ourselves? What about murmurings? We can read in I Corinthians 10 about that. When we are irregular in our service to God, whether it's daily service or whether it's worship service, we cannot be depended upon for encouragement from each other. That's what Hebrews 10:25 teaches. We're supposed to encourage each other. When you are missed, your encouragement is missed.

As we think about discipleship and heaven being worth it all, let's very briefly look at some rewards of discipleship. In II Corinthians 11, starting with verse 23 through especially verse 25, Paul talks about a man who endured much hardship. He's talking about himself. None of us have gone through this. And I hope I never go through parts of this. But still he said heaven is worth it all. Paul looked for the house whose builder and maker is God. He was looking for a house that was not made with hands. He was looking for the riches in the grace of God. You remember when he was praying to God and the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient." He's looking for that. Paul was looking for a glorious transformation. He said our citizenship is in heaven, not here on earth. He was looking for a glorious transformation in Philippians 3, where he can be like Christ forever and ever. We remember the passage in II Timothy 4:8 where he was looking for a crown of righteousness. Have you looked on down in II Timothy 4, especially in verse 18. He was looking for a heavenly kingdom. He believed it. Listen to what he says.

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"The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen."

What about Peter? Peter was a man who suffered hardship. I Corinthians 4:9-13, Paul talks about a man who suffered hardship. But you see, Peter was looking for an inheritance that would not perish. He was looking for an inheritance that was undefiled. He was looking for an inheritance that would not fade away. Sounds like a verse that he wrote in I Peter 1:4, doesn't it? In II Peter 3:13-14, he was looking for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

What about John? John really suffered didn't he? He was put on an isle, the isle of Patmos. He was exiled there because of his belief. He wrote what he believed by inspiration in Revelation 1:9, "I, John {now listen to this} your brother and partaker with you in tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Christ Jesus was in the isle that is called Patmos {Why?} for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." That's why he was put there; because he believed in whom he followed. He was happy to be shown the bliss of those who were triumphant over tribulation. Let me give you these passages: Revelation 7:9-17, he was blessed; Revelation 21:10 through verse 5 of the next chapter, John believed and was looking for the new heaven.

Now let's ask a question. Can there be any comparison between a few years of service or a long period of service? Someone may say maybe the hardships. But is there any difference? You see, an eternal bliss is waiting for both of these. That's why, whether we have served the Lord for a long or short time, heaven is going to be worth it all. We've looked at what Peter, Paul and John have said. If it was possible and they were here now, and were to tell us about paradise, what would they say? What if loved ones who have died in the Lord came back,

what would they say? There's no doubt in my mind, they would use this phrase; "Heaven will surely be worth it all." I guess what I'm trying to get through to each of us is that the cost of following Christ in this life could be the words of this song:

Often I'm hindered on life's way; Burdens so heavy I almost fall;

Then I hear Jesus sweetly say; Heaven will surely be worth it all.

Many the trial, toils and tears, Many a heartache may here appall;

But the dear Lord so truly says: Heaven will surely be worth it all.

Toiling and pain I will endure; Till I shall hear the death angel call;

Jesus has promised and I'm sure Heaven will surely be worth it all.

Heaven will surely be worth it all. Worth all the sorrow that here befall;

After this life with all its strife; Heaven will surely be worth it all.

Often I'm hindered on life's way. Oh, yes! Temptations and so forth. But then I hear Jesus sweetly say, "Heaven will surely be worth it all." But I must overcome these things. I must follow Christ Jesus. No matter, NO MATTER, what happens in this life, I must put my trust in Jesus Christ. Now think about a passage with me. In Hebrews 10:35-36, friends, the only way that we can receive the promise of the Lord is to be obedient to Him by His terms. By His terms! Have you been obedient to Christ on His terms? He lays them out very plainly and very simply. Hear His word, believe it, repent of your sins, confess His name, and be baptized. Oh, we have a problem with that. Why? We want to do certain parts, but not all of it. Why not be baptized for the remission of sins.

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If you are not walking in the light as He is in the light, He's not with you, because the Lord does not condone or associate with sin. If we are not with Him, we are against Him. If we say that we know Him and we do not the truth, we are liars. Oh! Harsh words, but Jesus said you are either sons of God or sons of the devil. Who do you follow? Is heaven going to be worth it all following after Jesus Christ? Yes! Because we have it written in God's word, Old and New Testament, both of them, that they trusted in God. Why not trust in God. If you've never been obedient by baptism, trust in His grace, mercy and love. Come repenting of sins, being buried with your Savior in baptism, Romans 6. If you're not living that faithful life, why not come back and confess your wrongs and ask the Lord to forgive you.

Chapter 9
Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage
Jonnie Hutchison

Jonnie Hutchison has been preaching the gospel for twenty-nine years. He is a 1976 graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching. Jonnie has labored with congregations in Virginia, Texas, Missouri, North Carolina and presently labors with the Liledoun Road church of Christ in Taylorsville, NC, where he has been for the past eleven and a half years. He has been married to his faithful companion, Gail, for twenty-nine years. Jonnie and Gail have three children and one grandchild.

The West Jefferson "Back to the Bible" lectures have been a highlight of my year for the past several years, both as a speaker and a listener. These lectures have been a beacon of doctrinal soundness and stability in this part of North Carolina, East Tennessee and Southwestern Virginia. However, I know for a fact that the teaching that has taken place at these lectures has gone far beyond the immediate vicinity through the books, CDs and tapes. If this world continues, these lectures may very well have a positive and profound effect upon the church for years to come. It is my hope and prayer that these lectures will continue for many years.

The subject of marriage, divorce and remarriage has been one of controversy down through the years. Sadly, there is much error taught concerning this subject. Only God knows how many precious souls will be eternally lost because they believed the errors taught on this subject. Equally as sad is the fact that those who hold to what Jesus taught about marriage, divorce and remarriage are often viewed as unloving, hard-hearted individuals who do not want people to be happy. There is only one means of being truly happy in this life and that is to follow the will of God, regardless of how difficult or what sacrifices are required.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up

his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it (Matthew 16:24-25 KJV).

Nothing gained in this life is worth the loss of one's soul – not material possessions, not popularity or prestige, and not even the temporary misguided happiness that results from unscriptural divorce and remarriage.

My heart is filled with both love and sorrow for those who have entered into unscriptural marriages. The heartache and pain involved can be tremendous indeed when one learns the truth and realizes that God did not approve of their divorce and does not approve of their remarriage and thus, they are in a relationship that will cause them and the one they believed to be their mate the loss of their souls. Especially is it difficult when children are involved. But friend, if you discover that your present marriage is not in harmony with the teaching of the Bible, our plea is that you will evidence a sacrificial love for God, realizing that your ultimate salvation, and that of others whose lives your decisions impact, is worth giving up any earthly relationship.

What has Jesus taught about marriage, divorce and remarriage? Volumes have been written concerning this subject. Our treatment of it will be brief at best. However, we trust it will be sufficient to help every reader to come to a better knowledge of our Lord's teaching on the subject.

Jesus Used Marriage to Illustrate and Teach Great Spiritual Truths

Jesus was concerned about marriage even from the very beginning of His earthly ministry. His first miracle (turning water into wine) was accomplished at a wedding

feast (John 2). The very presence of Jesus at this marriage testifies to His approval of the institution of marriage.

Jesus used marriage as a means of illustrating various spiritual truths. He compared certain truths about the kingdom of heaven to a marriage (Matthew 22:2ff). He taught the parable of the ten virgins which illustrates the necessity of preparation for the bridegroom's (Lord's) second coming (Matthew 25:1-13). Jesus used marriage to teach the necessity of humility (Luke 14:7-11). Jesus included marriage as an illustration of how life will be continuing normally until His second coming (Matthew 24:37-39).

On one occasion, Jesus was presented with what his detractors believed to be an unanswerable dilemma for Him concerning a woman who had been married seven times. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They asked Jesus concerning a woman who had been married to seven different men: "Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her" (Matthew 22:28 KJV). Jesus answered their supposed dilemma in such a way that it astonished the multitude who heard it. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:29-30 KJV). Thus, Jesus taught that marriage is limited to this present earthly existence. When this world ends, so will end the institution of marriage.

Jesus Taught God's Universal Law of Marriage

On one occasion, the Pharisees asked Jesus a question regarding a writing of divorcement permitted under the Mosaical system. In His answer to them, Jesus set forth God's universal law regarding marriage:

And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate (Matthew 19:4-6 NKJV).

There are several things we learn about marriage from these words. First, marriage was instituted by God at the very beginning of man's existence. Since God originated marriage, then obviously He alone has the right to legislate concerning marriage. Second, marriage is permitted for those who have never been married before. The phrase "leave father and mother" implies no previous marriage. Third, marriage requires husband and wife to be "joined together." The King James Version uses the word "cleave". The Greek word is *kollao* which, according to Strong means, "to glue, i.e. (passively or reflexively) to stick (figuratively)."¹ So the couples who marry "leave" father and mother and "cleave" to one another. They are to stick to one another like glue. Fourth, in marriage two people are joined together as one. Their goals, hopes and dreams are to become one. There is an intimacy in marriage that is to be found in no other earthly relationship. Fifth, when two people marry they are "joined" (glued) together by God and no man has the authority to separate what God has joined. In other words, no man has the right to dissolve that marriage.

Thus, the universal law of God on marriage has been in existence since the very beginning of the relationship of the first man and woman. It is reaffirmed by the teaching of Jesus in Matthew chapter nineteen and continues to be in effect in every generation including our own. Those

who conclude that Jesus was dealing only in this context with explaining what was taught under the Law of Moses and therefore, has no application to modern man (e.g. Dyrel W. Collins, in his book *"Marriage in God's Plan"*), must explain why Jesus affirms God's initial universal law on marriage, which was in effect long before the Law of Moses was given. This initial law of God on marriage was in force before the Law of Moses, while the Law of Moses was in force and after the Law of Moses was no longer in force. It continues to be God's law on marriage today.

A Myriad of Man-Made Doctrines

God's law on marriage is one man for one woman for a lifetime. God never intended for men and women to have multiple marriages during their lives. God's view of ending marriage through divorce is clearly stated in Malachi 2:15-16, "...Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce..." (NKJV).

In modern society, divorce is granted for almost any reason and is easily obtained. The state of Nevada grants divorces to almost anyone willing to stay there for six weeks in order to meet minimum residency requirements necessary to obtain a divorce. This allows those who live in other states to obtain a "quickie divorce" and then return home after six weeks.

So-called "quick divorce kits" are available on the internet. CompleteCase.com describes itself as:

North America's premier affordable divorce service center. Our simple and inexpensive process will enable you to complete your divorce documents from the comfort of your home, without incurring the cost of an attorney, or

dealing with lengthy completion and delivery periods. The total cost is \$249.00."²

Many lawyers who specialize in divorce cases advertise their services extensively and are never at a loss for business. Figures from the National Statistics Report issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Health Statistics shows that one in every two marriages in this country end in divorce.³ This appalling divorce rate evidences either one of two things: (1) people do not know what the Bible teaches on the subject or, (2) they do not care.

It would be interesting to know the exact figures of divorces that have taken place when both husband and wife are members of the Lord's church. If such compiled figures exist, this writer is not aware of them. However, that divorce occurs in Christian homes cannot be denied. It is extremely sad when a Christian couple attempts to end their marriage by divorce. In any divorce sin is necessarily involved. Somewhere along the line, someone in that marriage did not fulfill the divine obligations God requires of husband or wife. Somewhere along the line, the will of God was violated and the result was something God says He hates.

Through the years, brethren have sought to circumvent what Jesus taught about divorce and remarriage. Whole books and any number of articles have been written in recent years advancing views about divorce and remarriage that go beyond or fall short of what Jesus taught on the subject. No doubt there are those in churches of Christ who believe that God allows divorce and remarriage for any cause, including adultery. Such an idea would be inherent in accepting the postmodernism that is affecting the church in a variety of ways today. According to postmodernism, there is no such thing as absolute truth. If this belief is to be accepted, then it would

necessarily follow that no one can know the truth regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage. But this strange and unacceptable view is flatly contradicted by Jesus in the words, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:23 KJV).

Some have taught that the alien sinner is not amenable to the law of Christ. In his debate with Dub McClish, Dan Billingsly affirmed the proposition: "The New Testament teaches that all alien sinners are subject only to the first principles of the covenant law of Christ for salvation."⁴ If alien sinners (non-Christians) are amenable only to the first principles (e.g., faith in Christ, repentance, confession of faith, and baptism) then whatever Jesus said about divorce and remarriage is not applicable to them until after they become Christians. But Billingsly goes a step further claiming that "passages in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - before the cross - was Old Testament teaching of the Law of Moses for only the nation of Israel."⁵ Thus, Billingsly would eliminate the first four books of the New Testament from the New Testament canon, necessarily eliminating what Jesus taught about divorce and remarriage as applicable to any living person today.

In his book, *Marriage Is God's Plan*, Dyrel Collins teaches that in Matthew chapter nineteen, Jesus is clarifying the teaching of the Law of Moses rather than teaching something different than what the Law of Moses allowed. He states that the "traditional view" of marriage, divorce and remarriage does not take into consideration the context of Matthew 19, and to whom the words are addressed. "The context of the discussion makes it clear that He was speaking to Jews about an issue of the Jewish Law" (pg. 42). "The discussion in Matthew 19 is about 'putting away' and not about a 'bill of divorcement.' Jesus never condemned the giving of a 'bill of divorcement' (*apostasion*) in this or any other passage" (pg. 41).⁶ Is Matthew 19:9 limited to a "discussion of the Mosaic Law"

as brother Collins asserts? If so, then it applies only to the Jews and not to us. If it is limited to a discussion of the Law of Moses, then it no longer applies to any living person today, for the Law of Moses has been done away (Colossians 2:14-16). Although the Lord lived under the Mosaic Law, respected the law, kept the law, and came to fulfill the law - He also taught and exemplified sacred principles, precepts, and teachings which would find their application in His kingdom. The Lord used language such as, "Ye have heard that it was said...but I say unto you..." (Matthew 5:22-44). In such statements, the Lord was not explaining the law; but rather, giving His teaching, which would become a part of His New Testament. A similar phrase is used by Jesus in Matthew 19:9. After explaining why Moses allowed the Jews to "put away their wives" (because of the hardness of their hearts) He then says, "**And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery**" (KJV). This is a contrast with what was allowed under the Law of Moses rather than an explanation of what was allowed.

E.C. Fuqua, James Bales, and Homer Hailey have all written books setting forth the idea that only a Christian couple may violate Matthew 19:9. Rather than alien sinners being subject to the law of Christ they are instead subject to some innate "law of the heart" (Bales) or "universal moral law" (Hailey) outside of both the Law of Moses (while it was in force) and outside the New Testament of Jesus Christ. Thus, according to this view, non-Christians may divorce and remarry for any reason, as many times as they desire, and not be guilty of adultery. Only if and when they obey the gospel are they subject to the teaching of Jesus on divorce and remarriage. And only from that point on must they be concerned with abiding in the teaching of Christ in Matthew chapter nineteen.

According to this view then, when an alien sinner who has been divorced for a reason other than adultery and remarried, obeys the Gospel, he or she may continue in his or her current remarriage.

The truth is, Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and in earth and over all flesh (John 17:2; Matthew 28:18). All people will be judged by His word at the end of time (John 12:48; Acts 17:30-31). His word is what He taught during His earthly ministry and the entirety of the written New Testament. The gospel and the word of Christ are the same body of truth (1 Peter 2:23-25). Jesus sent His disciples into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15-16); thus, the gospel or word of Christ is for all. Another consideration is that when Jesus uttered the words of Matthew 19:9, He began them with the term, "Whosoever." That includes any person and all persons regardless of one's spiritual condition - saint and sinner alike - and excludes none!

Another view held by brethren is that one who has been divorced and remarried in violation of what Jesus taught in Matthew chapter nineteen, may be forgiven of the sin, and yet continue in the current remarriage. One with this view has written:

The emphasis of Scripture is that we are to keep our marriage vows, otherwise we become unfaithful in conduct. If you have broken your vows by divorcing then you have the avenue of repentance and prayer open to you. You must determine to take your **present covenant** (emphasis mine, JH) seriously and do your best never to break it. If you truly repent then you will be forgiven, just as any Christian is forgiven of any sin he or she may repent of.⁷

With homosexual marriage, a hot bed political issue today, we have to wonder if our brethren who hold to this view

would tell the homosexual, "You must determine to take your present covenant seriously and do your best never to break it"? Homosexuality and adultery are both "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21). If one may continue in an adulterous marriage by simply saying, "I repent," why could one not continue in a homosexual marriage by saying, "I repent?" Brethren who hold this view need to understand that the definition of repentance is a "change of mind that results in a change of conduct." One who would repent could no more continue in a remarriage that is adulterous than one could continue in a homosexual marriage, which is fornication.

Some have taught that God sets forth no grounds for divorce and remarriage at all. The basic argument in support of this view is similar to that mentioned earlier in this lesson that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are not a part of the New Testament, and that anything taught before Acts chapter two is not applicable today. There is a difference of view however. While both hold to the view that Matthew 19:9 is not a part of the New Testament, those mentioned earlier in our study would say that this **allows** divorce while these brethren would tell us that this **forbids** divorce. One brother in a debate a few years ago challenged his opponent to, "Find a passage between the beginning (Acts 2) and the end (Revelation) that says fornication is grounds for divorce and remarriage." His able opponent in turn challenged this man to find the statement of Matthew 28:19 restated after Acts 2.⁸ The truth is that spiritual law can be stated before it comes into effect. Jesus taught the necessity of the new birth before it came into effect (John 3:5). Because it was taught before Acts 2, is it not applicable today? Jesus, while on earth, gave instructions regarding the new birth that would apply after His New Covenant came into effect. Likewise, the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19:9 and Matthew 5:31-32 are a contrast to what was allowed under the Law of

Moses and sets forth spiritual law that is applicable under the New Covenant of Jesus Christ.

What Jesus Taught In Matthew 19

The Question: Matthew 19:3, "The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?'" (NKJV). The Pharisees were opposed to Jesus. They made every effort to cause Jesus to either say or do something they could condemn. The motive behind their question was not one of honest inquiry, but dishonest animosity. There were two prominent views among the Jews at that time regarding the cause of divorce. The followers of a Rabbi named Hillel believed that the "uncleanness" in Deuteronomy 24:1 included anything a man considered displeasing in his wife, which would allow him to divorce her. On the other hand, a Rabbi named Shammai explained "uncleanness" as adultery. Both taught that the one put away could remarry. Actually, both were wrong in their conclusions. Hillel nullified the restraints of Deuteronomy 24 and Shammai nullified the death penalty of Deuteronomy 22:22 and Leviticus 20:10. The Jews who asked Jesus this question were trying to get him to choose between these two views. If the majority of the people held to the more liberal view (as some contend was the case), then if Jesus took the more conservative view the majority may have been inclined to turn away from him as the Pharisees desired.

Our Lord's Response: In the answer that Jesus gives, he shows that neither school of thought understood God's original institution of "one man for one woman for life" (Matthew 19:4-6). The problem was that, though Moses commanded the giving of a "writing of divorcement" for the cause of "uncleanness," many had abused this process and mistreated their wives by "putting them away" for

every cause. One brother has written, the "Law of Moses was given to REGULATE DIVORCE according to the hardness of men's hearts—NOT AS AN ENDORSEMENT OF DIVORCE, but TO PREVENT FURTHER ABUSES, while TEACHING THE SERIOUSNESS & SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE" (Joe R. Price).

In contrast to both of these views, Jesus sets forth a different teaching which reaffirms God's original intent. As Robertson says, "Certainly Jesus has lifted the whole subject of marriage and divorce to a new level, far beyond the petty contentions of the schools of Hillel and Shammai."⁹ From the beginning until now, God's intention of "one man for one woman for life" has never changed. The phrase "from the beginning it was not so" is present perfect tense in the Greek, indicating something in the past continuing through to the present. Vincent writes, "It was not so (*ou gegonen outwo*). The A.V. is commonly understood to mean, it was not so in the beginning. But that is not Christ's meaning. The verb is in the perfect tense (denoting the continuance of past action or its results down to the present). He means: Notwithstanding Moses' permission, the case has not been so from the beginning until now. The original ordinance has never been abrogated nor superseded, but continues in force."¹⁰ Easy divorce, for just any and every cause, is not now acceptable nor has it ever been acceptable, regardless of the possession of a "writing of divorcement." The rule of Christ's Kingdom removes any dispute regarding the question of divorce or putting away (Matthew 19:9). Jesus is not explaining the practice of the Law of Moses in Matthew 19:9, but setting forth a principle of truth applicable to those in His kingdom, just as he did in Matthew 5:30-32.

The One Exception: "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, **except for sexual immorality**, and marries commits adultery; and whoever marries her who

is divorced commits adultery” (Matthew 19:9 NKJV). Jesus teaches that one who divorces his wife for a reason other than sexual immorality (fornication, KJV) and then remarries keeps on committing adultery. And the one who marries his wife whom he divorced also keeps on committing adultery. Thus, the only exception to the rule taught by Jesus that **divorce + remarriage = adultery** is if and only if one’s mate has engaged in fornication or sexual immorality.

Perhaps some examples will help our understanding. John and Jane have been married for five years. John commits adultery with his co-worker, Alice. When John’s adultery is exposed, Jane seeks a divorce from John for adultery. The divorce is granted and John responds by marrying Alice. John’s marriage to Alice is an adulteress union according to the teaching of Jesus. In the meantime Jane meets Bob. Bob has never been married before. Bob and Jane are married. Their marriage is not an adulteress marriage according to the teaching of Jesus, for Jane had divorced John for his adultery.

When Nick and Beth became husband and wife neither had been married previously. For a time their marriage was a happy one. However, as time went on Beth became resentful of Nick’s treatment of her. Nick was verbally abusive, treating Beth more like a slave than a wife. Beth decides that Nick will not change and seeks a divorce from him for incompatibility. The divorce is granted by the courts. Beth then meets Ted and remarries. According to the teaching of Jesus, Beth and Ted are involved in an adulteress relationship, for sexual immorality was not the reason for the divorce of Beth and Nick.

Sometime **before** the remarriage of Beth, Nick meets Jo Ann and he too remarries. According to the teaching of Jesus, the marriage of Nick and Jo Ann is an adulterous relationship. Some teach that in the above scenario, Beth’s

remarriage would not be adultery because Nick (Beth's first husband) remarried before she did, thus, committing adultery. The problem with this view is that Jesus taught, "And whosoever marries her who is put away commits adultery." If Nick's remarriage frees Beth (makes her eligible) to be remarried, it would be impossible for the one marrying Beth to be guilty of adultery too, and yet Jesus said he would be.

The argument is also made that motive is involved, i.e., if the wife pleaded with her husband not to divorce her (not for fornication) that when he remarries, thus committing adultery, she is free to be remarried. First, that cannot be found in Scripture. Second, what if... the offended wife, cannot wait for her husband to commit adultery, and SHE commits adultery that would also, by that definition, free the husband to be remarried who had no intention of continuing the marriage! (This new system is also known as "mental divorce").¹¹

What Jesus Taught in Matthew 5:31-32

"Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery" (Matthew 5:31-32 NKJV). This passage is in the context where Jesus is contrasting what men say with what He says. Understand that the "writing of divorcement" permitted because of the hardness of the hearts of the Jews under the Mosaical system was being abused by the Jews of Jesus' day. They were using this provision to divorce their wives for any cause. Jesus contrasts this practice with His requirement of the one exception that permits divorce,

which is sexual immorality. Again, Jesus is not explaining the Law of Moses regarding a bill of divorcement, but contrasting what was commonly and wrongly practiced with what was required by God. This passage is in perfect harmony with the statements of Jesus in Matthew 19:9.

What Jesus Taught in Mark 10:11-12

“So He said to them, ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery’” (Mark 10:11-12 NKJV). The context of this passage is parallel to Matthew chapter nineteen. One obvious difference between the two accounts is the inclusion in Mark’s record referring to the woman who divorces her husband. What is true of the man who divorces his wife is true also of the woman who divorces her husband. The one exception that permits divorce and the remarriage of the innocent spouse is not given in Mark’s account as it is in Matthew’s.

CONCLUSION

One writer penned that there are “countless difficulties, embarrassments and frustrations both theologically and in attempt at practical application” when accepting what he called the “traditional interpretation” of what Jesus taught.¹² It is obvious that the disciples of the Lord understood the truth Jesus taught to be restrictive. They responded by saying, “If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry” (Matthew 19:10 NKJV). Whether there are “countless difficulties, embarrassments and frustrations both theologically and in attempt at practical application” is a moot point. There are many who obviously have a problem applying and holding to what the Bible teaches about the necessity of

baptism for salvation. Some of our brethren have obviously decided that it, too, is a doctrine that causes “countless difficulties, embarrassments and frustrations both theologically and in attempt at practical application” so they are now spouting “the sinner’s prayer” concept of salvation. Simply because there are difficulties that arise or frustrations that occur does not give any person the right to reject divine truth. Dyrrel Collins refers to what he calls the “traditional view” of this subject as teaching that divorce is the “unpardonable sin.”¹³ This brother is absolutely wrong! Any person can receive forgiveness who conforms to the will of God, including those who may be unscripturally divorced and remarried. Yes, it may be necessary to get out of a relationship or remain unmarried, but one can be forgiven. And anything that one must give up here in order to go to heaven will be worth the loss and sacrifice.

What Jesus taught about marriage, divorce and remarriage expresses both the sanctity and the intended permanency of the marriage relationship. It testifies to the seriousness with which the God of heaven views marriage. One man for one woman for a lifetime is God’s plan. If only every person who utters the vows of marriage before God would understand what it means to break those precious vows. To break those vows means that you did not tell the truth when you said, “I do.” Divorce says you didn’t really mean it. It is a tragic mistake to believe that marriages may be dissolved at the whim of God’s creatures without souls being put into eternal jeopardy. We must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and accept what Jesus taught about marriage, divorce and remarriage.

¹ (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary.

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² <http://www.completecase.com/>

³ <http://www.cdc.gov/>

⁴ The McClish-Billingsly Debate, *The Amenability of Alien Sinners to the Law of Christ*, pg. 4 (Valid Publications, Inc. 312 Pearl St., Denton, TX. ©1986).

⁵ Windell Wiser in *Response to Dan Billingsly on John 3:16*, (Know Your Bible, January 1999, http://www.wisearchurch.com/bulletin_jan_99.html).

⁶ Dyrel Collins, *Marriage Is God's Plan* (Star Bible Publication)

⁷ J. Lee Sanders, et al *Views on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage*, <http://www.theexaminer.org/volume6/number6/marriage.htm>

⁸ Quoted from an article by Roy Deavor entitled *Matthew 19:9 Is A Part of the New Testament*, (The Restorer, Round Knob church of Christ, Hillsville, VA weekly bulletin, November 6, 1994).

⁹ Robertson's Word Studies Online: <http://www.godrules.net/library/robert/robertmat19.htm>

¹⁰ Vincent's Word Studies Online: <http://www.godrules.net/library/vincent/vincentmat19.htm>

¹¹ Author Unknown, *The Waiting Game*, (Glad Tidings of Good Things, Jacksonville church of Christ, Jacksonville, AL, Vol. 9/ June 24, 2004, pg. 3).

¹² Dyrel Collins, *Marriage Is God's Plan*, Publishers Statement (Star Bible Publications)

¹³ IBID.



Chapter 10
Offenses & Forgiveness
Wesley Simons

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Introduction

These verses have been misapplied by some. They claim that these verses are saying that before one can expose a false teacher, he must go to him first. Do I have to go to Billy Graham before I can expose his "faith only" doctrine? Do I need to call Rubel Shelly before I expose his error? This is not the import of these verses. Matthew is not addressing false doctrine taught by those in or out of the church. He is talking about personal differences between brethren and how to solve them.

If we would follow the prescription for problem-solving laid out by our Lord, then many problems in the church would go away. However, what brethren have a tendency to do is call as many fellow Christians as possible and line them up on their side. By the time both sides have done this, the problem is too large and out of control. The church is then facing the possibility of a split. Most

church splits are over personalities rather than doctrine. This is an ungodly shame!

If we do not forgive our fellow man, God will not forgive us: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matthew 6:14-15). However, we do not have to forgive them until they repent: "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (Luke 17:3). God will not forgive us until we repent. He does not require more of us than what He is willing to do. We must always have a forgiving attitude. Forgiveness is something that all of us are in need of at one time or another.

Leo Boles made these observations:

In addition to what Jesus had already said about causing others to stumble, he now gives instructions how to restore those who do stumble. Certain rules are to be observed and principles followed in dealing with the erring...This teaching is prospective as the church had not been established at this time (Boles, p.375).

Attempt Reconciliation

Matthew 18:15 "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

When our brother trespasses against us, we are to go to him. Many times we say, "He wronged me. Let him come and make it right." Here God puts the obligation upon the innocent party to take the first step. This is how important unity is among brethren.

Brethren are very slow in going to tell a brother that he has offended them. However, Jesus says this is what

needs to be done. We are afraid that going to a brother will cause more trouble. Before we go, we need to make sure it is a genuine offense and not a petty or nit-picking adventure. Neither should it be with the attitude that I will get even with you.

On the other hand, if we go to worship and remember that our brother has ought against us, we are to make every effort to make it right: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23-24). The offended and the offender both have an obligation to make things right with each other. What a beautiful plan!

The concept of "hear" in this verse is that he is willing to do that which is right. Some will hear and some will not. The following verses tell us what to do if a brother will not hear.

McGarvey states:

The word rendered *trespass* (amartasa) means to *sin*; and the clause should be rendered, "if thy brother sin against thee." In the former part of the discourse Jesus had warned the disciples against giving offense, or in any way mistreating a brother; now he tells them how to proceed when a brother sins against them (McGarvey, p.158).

Establish The Facts

Matthew 18:16 "But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

After one has tried to be reconciled to his brother, but the brother refuses to make things right, then he is told to take one or two witnesses and go back to the one who has done the offending. God does not want it to come down to

one brother's word against another's. He wants witnesses to establish the effort put forth by the innocent brother in trying to solve the problem. If a brother is truly innocent, why would he fear going to the offending party? Why would he mind having others to hear what takes place?

We should appreciate a brother who loves us enough to tell us when we have done wrong. If we love God and our fellow man, we will do all we can to make things right. Why? Because we want peace with God, our brother and the church of our Lord.

Coffman makes the following points:

When one feels wronged by another in the church, the temptation is for him to seek out some personal friend or confidant, and to elaborate the real or fancied wrong by embellishing it with every possible coloring and emphasis, thus spreading hate against the offending party. Telling the elders, the deacons, or the preacher, or anyone else, of the evil detected in another is wrong (till after the first admonition); and even after the first admonition, the greatest number to be acquainted with it is two others (see verse 16). *Go to the offender first!* That is God's commandment! Those who depart from it, preferring some other way, do so at their eternal peril (Coffman p.283).

Tell It To The Church

Matthew 18:17 "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

If the brother will not hear the offended brother and if he will not make it right before witnesses, then it is to be told to the church. How many times have you known this

to happen? Very few!! The church is then to address the problem. If he will not hear the church, then he is to be treated as an heathen or a publican. This means that the church is to withdraw fellowship from the hard-hearted brother.

Discipline is a forgotten commandment. However, it is a command from God: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thessalonians 3:6). We say the Baptists are in trouble for neglecting the command to be baptized for the remission of sins. In like fashion, all congregations that will not practice church discipline are in trouble in the sight of God.

God's Plan For Personal Unity

Matthew 18:18 "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Whatsoever has already been bound in heaven is to be bound on earth. God has a plan for solving problems between brethren and He wants it bound on us. Once this is bound on me, it forces me to go the extra mile to solve all problems with my brother. This is productive of congregational love and unity.

Bob Winton shows the meaning of this verse in its context:

If this verse is taken as part of the preceding three-verse context, then it means that their decision about withdrawal of fellowship from a certain member of the coming church would be honored in heaven (Winton notes on Matthew).

How shall the world know that we are Christians?

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35). We must show the world the beauty of living the Christian life by the way we love each other.

If Two Or Three Agree

Matthew 18:19 “Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.”

The religious world has done great damage to these verses. They say, “If so and so has cancer and two or three agree to pray for that person, then God will remove the cancer.” God has made no such promise! Why don’t two or three of them get together and ask God to save the world? Because He has pointed out how he plans to do that. The context of this verse is solving problems between brethren.

All prayers must be governed by the scriptures. We cannot pray for just anything. It must be in harmony with His will. “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:14-15).

We must pray as our Lord prayed: “Saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). Paul prayed three times that his thorn in the flesh be removed. However, God’s grace was sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

Winton observes:

God is well-pleased when we offer up united prayers to him. This is one among many scriptural indications that audible, public prayers are permitted and encouraged. Some have assumed, based on a misinterpretation of Matthew 6:5f, that prayers must always be offered in privacy (when no one else is present, or silently). The prayer of one humble, faith-filled saint has great influence on our Heavenly Father; of how much greater impact must the prayers of several of His saints have with Him! (Winton's notes on Matthew).

Where Two Or Three Are Gathered Together

Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

These verses have been misused to show if two or three are gathered together for worship, God will be there. This is not talking about worship. It is talking about solving problems. What about John on the Isle of Patmos? He might have been the only Christian on that Isle. Could he have worshipped God? He could not if it takes two or three before God is there.

It takes at least two to have an argument. However, if these two (or more, if more are involved) get together as per Matthew 18:15-18 to solve their problems in a Bible way, then God is there and approves of their action and love for each other. One of the things that we can do and know that the presence of God is involved is to solve the differences we have with our brothers. We should work hard to promote the unity that each congregation needs to be pleasing to God.

How Often Shall We Forgive Our Brother

Matthew 18:21-22 "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

Some get upset with Peter because he came up with the number seven as if forgiveness could be limited, but we need to commend him. How many of us can forgive a brother who has truly offended us just one time? The Lord said not seven times, but seven times seventy (490 times). Luke 17:4 "And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." How many of us could forgive a person who trespassed against us seven times in a day? Have you ever trespassed against God seven times in a day? Do you want God to forgive you when you do such?

We expect from God what we are not willing to offer to others. We see the wrong in that person who is constantly doing that which offends us. Then we wonder why he will not change! Even though he repents, we have a hard time finding mercy toward such a weak brother. Do we want God to have this attitude toward us?

We All Need Forgiveness

Matthew 18:23-27 "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee

all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt."

The context of this parable grows out of the disciples fighting among themselves over who is the greatest in the kingdom (verse 1). The Lord takes a little child unto himself and tells the disciples that they are going to have to be converted and become as a little child in order to be saved (verses 2-3). He tells them that they must humble themselves to be great in the kingdom (verse 4). He also says that it would be better for a man to have a millstone hanged around his neck and then thrown into the sea than to offend one of these little ones (verse 5). He says that offenses will come, but woe unto him by whom the offenses come (verse 7). He states that one should get rid of that which is causing the offense (verses 8-9). He warns against despising one of the little ones (verse 10). He then tells that He has come to seek and save that which is lost (verse 11). He tells the value of rescuing one soul by telling the parable of the ninety and nine (verses 12-14). He shows how we ought to go about trying to rescue a brother who has offended us (verses 15-17). He says that when people meet on earth to resolve differences, then He is there also (verses 18-20). It is from this context that Peter asked the question that he did and the Lord told the parable of the unforgiving servant.

The kingdom of heaven is like a king taking account of his servants. He finds one who owes a debt that he cannot pay, a circumstance in which all of us are found at times. He finds that one owes him ten thousand talents and the king wants payment to be made in full (McGarvey said that a talent would be equal to about \$1,600 American dollars. Ten thousand talents would be equal to \$16,000,000 American dollars. If it was a gold talent, the price would be \$325,000,000).

The debtor begs for patience. He wants more time to pay his debt. He falls down, worships the king and

declares that he will pay all. (The average daily wage in Palestine was one shilling [17 cents]. At this pay rate, it would take 307,692 years to pay the debt. The fact that the servant said that he would pay the debt shows that he did not realize the enormity of it. If the debtor made \$5,000 a year and could pay all of it on the debt, it would only take 3,200 years to pay the debt. He would still have 1,230 years to go in 2003. If the debtor made \$10,000 a year and could pay all of that on the debt, it would only take him 1,600 years to pay the debt).

The king had commanded that the servant, his wife, their children and all that he had be sold. We see a similar problem in 2 Kings 4:1 "Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen." This is indeed a terrible situation.

The plea for mercy is heard by the king, who was moved with compassion and looses the servant, sets him free and forgives his debt. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8). "But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us" (Ephesians 2:4).

The king did not have to forgive the debt, but he did. The king here represents God. The debtor represents us. We have a sin debt that we could not pay. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Romans 5:8-9). Man stands bankrupt before the true and living God. Everything that we have belongs to God. Psalm 24:1 "The earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

The Unmerciful Servant

Matthew 18:28-30 "But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt."

One reason the first debtor might not have done better at paying his bills was because he had those who owed him. The forgiven servant goes out and finds a man who owes him one hundred pence (worth about \$15 American dollars according to McGarvey). This would have been about one third of a year's wage.

Notice how unforgiving the forgiven servant is. He lays hands on him and takes him by the throat and demands payment. The debtor asks the first servant to please be patient. He states that he will pay him all. However, the forgiven servant will not be patient and has the servant cast into prison. Jesus is trying to teach that after God has forgiven us of so much, can't we forgive our fellowman of just a little? The forgiven man was very unkind and unforgiving toward the man who owed him.

We Are Wicked If We Fail To Forgive

Matthew 18:31-33 "So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?"

The fellowservants saw the unforgiving attitude of the unmerciful servant and were sorry for his conduct. People see our unforgiving attitude. One cannot hide hatred. The lord of the servant would not tolerate this servant's unforgiving and unmerciful attitude.

The lord reminded the man that he had been forgiven because he begged for mercy. However, when the forgiven servant had a chance to respond to another human being in like fashion, he refused to forgive. The lord calls him a wicked servant. We are wicked when we fail to forgive those who have repented of their wrongs toward us. Of all people, this man should have understood the concept of mercy and forgiveness. All he wanted was gain for self. He had no pity or mercy to share with others. "All for me and none for you" was his attitude even in the realm of forgiveness.

Forgive From The Heart

Matthew 18:34-35 "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

I have known of two Christians who have stated, "I will never forgive so and so." I told them they had just sealed their doom. If our brother repents, we must forgive him or be lost. **Here is the lesson the Lord wants us to get from this parable. We forgive, or we are not forgiven.** "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15). **Again, let me state, we do not have to forgive until they repent.** I have known of preachers and Bible teachers who have taught just the opposite. "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass

against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (Luke 17:3).

The forgiveness must come from the heart. We must always have a forgiving attitude. If our brother has ought against us, we are to go to him. We cannot state this strongly enough. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23-24). If we have ought against our brother, we are to go to him. This is a must. "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:15-17).

Brethren are commanded to treat each other a certain way. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). Notice the Lord's attitude: "For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee (Psalm 86:5). We must have the same attitude to be God-like.

If we want to be forgiven, we must forgive others. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37). Paul calls upon the church at Corinth to forgive the brother from whom they had withdrawn after he repents. "So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a

one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (2 Corinthians 2:7).

Look at the example of Jesus when it came to forgiveness. "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots" (Luke 23:34). Stephen also left us a great example. "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep." (Acts 7:60).

Conclusion

Let us notice some lessons that we can learn from this great chapter. If we do not forgive, then we will not be forgiven. We must forgive from the heart. Others see our ugly attitude when we do not forgive. Failing to forgive one allows that person to control our lives and thoughts. **I should want to forgive because it makes me God-like. I should want to forgive because I will always need the forgiveness of others. I should want to forgive because of what it does for me.** We cannot worship acceptably unless we forgive, Matthew 5:23-24. **I should want to forgive for the spiritual good of the person I am forgiving:** 2 Corinthians 2:7 "So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." It does not do any good to say, "Well, you do not know what that person has done to me." Have they done more to you than what the people did to Christ? He had a forgiving attitude! This parable illustrates the point that as forgiveness is freely gained from God, it must be freely offered by us. May God help us to be a forgiving people.



Chapter 11
Being A Servant
Milton Mathers

Milton Mathers was baptized into Christ 1979 in Indio, CA. Graduated from the Southern Calif. School of Evangelism in Buena Park, CA in 1986. He has a B.A. degree from Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver, CO. Has preached in CA, Oregon, VA, NC, and now is presently preaching at the Mountain View Church of Christ, in Bluff City, TN. He is married to his precious wife, Gwyn Mathers. He helps with the Biblical Viewpoints and TV Sunday School TV programs in Elizabethton, TN, and with the weekly one-hour live call-in radio program that the Stoney Creek Church of Christ sponsors. He teaches the "Preacher & His Work" class for the Tri-Cities School of Preaching & Christian Development at the Stoney Creek Church of Christ in Elizabethton, TN.

As we introduce this lesson, we want to first focus our attention on the first six verses of Exodus 21, which has to do with the slaves having certain rights.

Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them. If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.

This applied to Hebrew servants. Additional information concerning Hebrew servants can be found in

Deuteronomy 15:12-18. The Hebrews were allowed to buy and sell their countrymen (Deuteronomy 15:12). However, they were not allowed to treat them harshly as "bond-servants," but as "hired servants" (Leviticus 25:39-43). This practice was very different from heathen practice of slavery and from our Civil War imagery of slavery. How did Hebrews become slaves? Some indentured themselves or members of their families to make restitution for financial obligations (1 Kings 4:1; Nehemiah 5:5). Those who robbed others and were unable to make restitution were sold into servitude (Exodus 22:2-3). Some parents sold their daughters with the intention of them becoming the wives or concubines of the wealthy (Exodus 21:7-11). Some were born to parents who were slaves (Exodus 21:4). Now, according to verse 2 of Exodus 21, there was a limit on the length of time they could make a male Hebrew slave serve. After six years, he was to be set completely free and he was to be provided for upon his release (Deuteronomy 15:13-14). According to verses 5-6, a Hebrew slave had the option of remaining with his master permanently. The slave would first declare his intention. This was verified and witnessed by the judges. He was then "earmarked." His ear was pierced with an awl and it was driven into the doorpost of his master's house. This symbolized his attachment to that house as a servant forever. This Bible account of a slave reminds me of an often-told story about Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln was instrumental in the first steps toward abolishing slavery.

One day he went down to a slave block to buy a slave girl. As she looked at the well-dressed white man bidding on her, she figured that he was just another one that was going to buy her and then abuse her. Well, Lincoln won the bid, but as he was walking away with his legal property, he said, "Young lady, you're free!" She was silent for a moment, and then she asked,

“What does that mean?” “It means you are free!”
“Does that mean I can say what I want to say?”
“Yes,” Lincoln replied. “Does it mean I can say what I want to do?” “Yes,” responded Lincoln.
“Does it mean I can go where I want to go?”
Lincoln said, “Yes, you can go wherever you want to go?” Then with tears streaming down her face she said, “Then I will go with you.”

What a picture! Pierce her ear to the door! She’s a slave captivated by love alone. When we get this down to where it belongs, we have to ask, “*Are you a pierced or a clip-on Christian?*” Clip-on Christianity is a come and go faith. Pierced Christianity is a true faith, a life-long attachment to our Master Jesus Christ; a true, loyal, dedicated servant!

As we go through this servant study, may we gain a better and clearer understanding of the nature of the **choice** of being a **servant** of Jesus Christ. The Bible calls on us to be servants.

TO BE A CHRISTIAN IS TO BE A SERVANT, A SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST

A servant is a *doulos* (doo’ los). It means:

1) *a slave, bondman, man of servile condition; 1a) a slave; 1b) metaph., one who gives himself up to another’s will, those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing His cause among men; 1c) devoted to another to the disregard of one’s own interests; 2) a servant, attendant!* (Thayers, Online Bible).

The apostle Paul refers to himself as being one, “a servant of Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:1). Shouldn’t we be the same,

servants of Jesus Christ? Also, we choose to be servants of Christ, we are not forced. Just like Joshua of old said:

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (Joshua 24:14-15).

New Testament Christians are willing to be servants. We have had the wonderful privilege to be saved so we can be servants. Hebrews 9:14: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge (cleanse) your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Hebrews 12:28: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved (shaken), let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

The word "serve," *latreuo* (lat-ryoo'-o), here means: 1) to serve for hire; 2) to serve, minister to, either to the gods or men and used alike of slaves and freemen; 2a) in the NT, to render religious service or homage, to worship; 2b) to perform sacred services, to offer gifts, to worship God in the observance of the rites instituted for His worship; 2b1) of priests, to officiate, to discharge the sacred office (Thayer).

Of all that God and Jesus did on our behalf, it is only reasonable for us to be His servants. Romans 12:1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,

that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your **reasonable service.**"

Every Christian is expected to fulfill his service to the Lord. Colossians 4:17: "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou **fulfil it.**" 2 Timothy 4:5: "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make **full proof** of thy ministry."

THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT ARE GREAT ABOUT BEING A SERVANT

Being a servant of God is a great honor. The title of "servant" was what many great men in the Old Testament were called. In Deuteronomy 9:27, we find where Moses pleaded with God to "Remember thy servants," such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When Solomon prayed unto God, he mentioned Moses as thy servant; and said in I Kings 8:53: "For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of **Moses thy servant**, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD." We find in Joshua 24:29, concerning Joshua's death, "And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the **servant of the LORD**, died, being an hundred and ten years old." There was Caleb, Numbers 14:24: "But **my servant Caleb**, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it." You probably already know about Job, Job 1:8: "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered **My servant Job**, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" Then God said of Isaiah, Isaiah 20:3: "And the LORD said, Like as **My servant Isaiah...**" God said of His prophets, Jeremiah 7:25: "Since the day that your fathers came forth

out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all **My servants** the prophets..."

New Testament writers referred to themselves as "servants," and were honored to be that. James, in James 1:1: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ..." Paul, in Romans 1:1: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God," Peter, in 2 Peter 1:1: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ..." Jude, in Jude 1:1: "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ..." John and Christians in Revelation 1:1: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to shew unto **His servants** things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John."

Jesus came to serve. He set the perfect example of "service." He was foretold to come as the "Suffering Servant" (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). He "did not come to be served, but to serve" - Matthew 20:28: "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (NKJV). Philippians. 2:7: "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

Being our Lord and Master, Jesus exemplified the servitude He desires of His disciples - John 13:12-17:

So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither He that is sent greater than He that

sent Him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye **do them**.

We want God to look upon us as “His servants,” as He did these great men of the Bible, including His own Son, Jesus Christ, don’t we? And He will, if we will but put into practice...

THE CONCEPTS OF BEING A SERVANT

Which involves a dedicated obedience. For example, in a slave-master relationship, the slave knows no law but his master’s word. He has no rights of his own. He is in the absolute possession of his master. He is bound to give his master unquestioning obedience. Doesn’t this describe our relationship to Christ as Christians? As Christian servants? It should, especially in light of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” We have to come to Jesus on HIS terms, not our own - Luke 6:46: “And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” Matthew 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.”

It also involves humility. Otherwise, obedience is not possible. When we have a humble opinion of ourselves, we are receptive to the idea of complete obedience. For example, consider Paul’s self-humble-estimation:

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more

abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

Ephesians 3:8: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." 1 Timothy 1:15: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Does this describe our relationship to Christ and His will? Jesus said it should! Luke 17:10: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are **unprofitable servants**: we have done that which was our duty to do." But if we murmur or complain about what Jesus tells us to do, can we really be considered "**servants**"? I guess we would then be called - complaining servants.

It also involves absolute loyalty. Since we became servants freely, it should be expected that we are to be loyal to Him first - Galatians 1:10: "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the **servant of Christ**." We should not consider our own profit or preference important, but that of the One we **freely serve**! It is amazing how anyone can claim to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, while complaining about having to do the will of God, or being negligent or slothful in carrying out His will. Many are like what we introduced our lesson with; they choose to be clip-on Christians. A come and go faith and not really a servant of Jesus Christ. But, they should be a pierced Christian, one who is faithful, a life-long attachment to our Master Jesus Christ; a true, loyal, dedicated servant! And, some act as though they are being forced against their own will! But they don't have to serve the Lord Jesus. Of course, the alternative is not very inviting. If we don't serve Jesus, by default we serve

Satan, and are destined for hell! But God, by His grace and mercy, has offered salvation, and how dare we ever grumble or complain. He calls us to a life of service in grateful appreciation.

CONCLUSION

It is true that the Christian has been saved to be a servant, to serve God and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a service that we should accept with humility and gratitude. If one chooses not to serve God, and Jesus Christ, then they remain a slave to sin, Romans 6:16a: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey..." And the end of such slavery is eternal death, Romans 6:16b: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death..." But, when one chooses to serve God and Jesus Christ, their servitude leads to righteousness, Romans 6:16c: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" And the end of such service is eternal life, Romans 6:22: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." May what the apostle Paul wrote of the brethren in Rome be true of all of us today:

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Romans 6:17-18).

Have you been set free from sin, that you might serve Jesus Christ? Romans 6:1-7:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should **not serve sin**. For he that is dead is **freed from sin**.

May God help us all to be servants of Jesus Christ!

Love Ya Brother!
Milton Mathers

Chapter 12

Life After Death

Ed Melott

Ed Melott was born in Clarksburg, WV on December 14, 1978 and was reared mostly in Doddridge County, WV. He is married to the former Kimberly Baker (1996) and has two children; a son, Hunter, who is nine and a daughter, Kameron, who is four. Ed is a 2001 graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching. Ed has worked with the Proctor Church of Christ in Proctor, WV, the Pike Church of Christ in Ellenboro, WV and presently serves the Steelton Church of Christ in New Martinsville, WV.

INTRODUCTION:

It is no mark of courage to speak lightly of human dying. We may do it in bravado, or in wantonness; but no man who thinks can call it a trifling thing to die. True thoughtfulness must shrink from death without Christ. There is a world of untold sensations prodded into that moment when a man realizes his hour is come. It is all over—his chance is passed, and his eternity is settled. None of us know, except by guess, what that sensation is. Myriads of human beings have felt it to whom life was dear; but they never spoke out their feelings, for such things are untold. And to every individual man throughout all eternity that sensation in its fullness can come but once. It is mockery...for a man to speak lightly about that which we cannot know till it comes (Baxter, *When Life Tumbles In*, 103).

Seemingly one of the most faithful foes in our time is the morning obituaries. Without partiality or prejudice it faithfully reveals the truthfulness of Moses' statement, "The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away"

(Psalm 90:10). It tragically reports the deaths of little ones and the middle aged. No distinction is made of race, language or gender. None are beyond the reach of the words, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT DEATH:

Death has been referred to as "giving up the ghost" or "breathed his or her last" (Genesis 25:8; 35:29; Lamentations 1:19; Acts 5:10). Bildad the Shuhite called death "the king of terrors" (Job 18:14). Job simply referred to death as "my change" (Job 14:14). It has often been called "going to thy fathers" (Genesis 15:15; 25:8; 35:29) or "putting off this tabernacle" (2 Peter 1:14). Job additionally stated, "I shall go the way of no return" (Job 16:22). The Psalmist contended that death is "going down into silence" (Psalm 115:17). God told Adam, "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). The apostle Paul said of man's last great venture on earth, that it is a "departure" (Philippians 1:23).

The word "death" means a separation and the end of a state or condition. One could therefore be dead in one sense and alive in another. To illustrate, the apostle Paul wrote, "I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died" (Romans 7:9). Did Paul mean to say that he became extinct or that he ceased to be? Certainly not, but that he ceased to be ignorant of sin through knowledge of God's law. One may say that his death was a separation of his ignorance and his intellect. To the Colossian church Paul declared, "You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). These Christians, contends Paul, had life after their death. They were dead to the world and its

sinful devices but alive to God. James revealed that “the body without the spirit is dead” (James 2:26). Did he therefore intend to say that such a separation resulted in the extinction or annihilation of one? During the death of Rachel, Moses records, “And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni: but his father called him Benjamin” (Genesis 35:18). When our Lord was approaching His own death (separation of body and spirit), He lovingly told the penitent thief, “Today, you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). Luke then recorded the last of the seven sayings of the cross: “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46). Though the lifeless bodies of the thief and our Savior were taken down from the crosses, their spirits were together in the hands of the Father in that place dubbed “Paradise” by the Lord.

Death is certain (Ecclesiastes 9:5), but what of life after death? Where do we go immediately after death? Does one go directly to heaven or hell? Is there a time of sleep before the resurrection? Is there a place of departed spirits? Are there books to which we could turn to acquire these coveted answers? To borrow the words of King Solomon, “Of making many books there is no end” (Ecclesiastes 12:12). In fact, many shelves of our local libraries are literally filled with books which purpose to answer these questions. Though much can be learned from the various books on the grand subject of life after death, there is only One who truthfully claims: “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (Revelation 1:18). Of the plural “keys,” Homer Hailey commented:

The word key or keys is never used literally in the New Testament but is always used figuratively or symbolically, as “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19) or the “key of

knowledge" (Luke 11:52). It is used four times in the Revelation, twice of Christ (1:18; 3:7), and twice of angels who have the key of the abyss (9:1; 20:1). The "key" or "keys" as used in the New Testament implies power and authority, either inherent or delegated by one to another. Each time a key is claimed or used, it implies the exercise of power from without...In this instance "keys" is plural, indicating His power over both death and Hades (Hailey, *An Introduction And Commentary Revelation*, 113).

W. A. Crisswell wrote:

When all the kings of the earth sleep in the dust of the ground and their power has passed away, when all of the enduring monuments of the earth have turned into the mist that the morning sun drives away, when all of the great of the earth sleep in the grave, He shall live and abide and reign forever and ever (Crisswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation*, 159).

Jesus is He Who's voice alone is able to penetrate the grave. He stated, "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28-29). While on earth, Jesus demonstrated this power by calling dead Lazarus back from the spirit world (John 11:43-44). Additionally, the message He taught was one of authority (Matthew 7:29). In fact, after His own resurrection, which proved Him to be the Son of God (Romans 1:4), He claimed, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). Does it not therefore seem

logical to approach He who has such power over death and Hades with questions of such enormity?

In our investigation of those things beyond the grave, we shall be primarily considering the words used in the teachings of Jesus, their meanings and implications. We will notice: (1) The intermediate state of the dead: Hades, which consisted of two very separate compartments: Paradise and Tartarus and (2) The eternal state of the dead: Heaven or Hell. Before entering into a study of such interest and magnitude, the words of a sermon by the late G. C. Brewer seem appropriate:

We are all interested in any question that relates to the future life. We would like to know, if possible, where we go immediately after death, and we would like to know whether our friends who have crossed the river are conscious, and if so, do they know what we are doing and how we grieve for their departure. Some of these questions we can not answer. There is nothing revealed that will satisfy all the longings that we have in reference to these things. I think, however, that this is a gracious provision of our Father. It would not be a comfortable thought to believe that our departed loved ones are always near us and always taking cognizance of the things that we are doing and thinking. Furthermore, I believe that the Lord wishes us to live in only one world at a time. It would probably disqualify us for the practical things of this life if he allowed us to dwell too great an extent upon the things of another life; upon the things of the Spirit world. For this reason, our Father has closed the door and shut out from us some of the things that we would like to know (Brewer, *Where Are The Dead?*, 15).

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE OF THE DEAD: HADES

James, the half brother of our Lord, taught that the body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26), but the opposite cannot be said to be true, for the spirit without the body is not dead! Though the body "returns to the dust" (Genesis 3:19), "the spirit shall return to the God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Jesus more than demonstrated this when referring to God as being the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, uttering, "God is not the God of the dead [though dead physically, ENM], but of the living" (Matthew 22:29-32). Clearly implied within His astonishing Words is a glimpse into the afterlife. Though these great Patriarchs had been physically dead for many years, they lived on. Perhaps the most revealing section of Scripture as to the state of the dead is found in Jesus' teaching about the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). Even a cursory reading of this great text reveals the following points: (1) The rich man, during his physical life, received many of those things deemed good (fared sumptuously, lived in luxury—margin); (2) Lazarus, on the other hand, was a poor beggar, who depended upon the charity of others for his necessary food, "desiring to be fed with the crumbs from the rich man's table"; (3) Subsequent to the death of Lazarus, the angels carried him into "Abraham's bosom"; (4) The rich man, subsequent to his death, was in torments in Hades; (5) Whereupon the rich man, in Hades, lifted his eyes and saw Abraham and Lazarus in his bosom; (6) He then cried for the mercy of Abraham, which consisted of sending Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cooling his tongue because of the tormenting of the flame; (7) Abraham then explained differences in the lives of the two men and the present situations; (8) Abraham then further explained that there was a great gulf fixed between them, and this gulf prevented their passing to one another; (9) The former rich

man then begged Abraham to send Lazarus to His father's house to warn his five brothers, lest they also come to this place of torment; (10) Abraham then explained that his brothers were obligated to hear the Word of God (Moses and the Prophets).

The following relevant observations can be drawn from the facts of this text: (1) Both the righteous and the wicked are conscious after death; (2) After death, some men are comforted, and other men are tormented; (3) This comfort and torment occur while life is still being lived upon the earth and therefore previous to the judgment; (4) The Hadean world, in which these departed spirits find themselves, is divided by a great gulf; (5) The one, the Lord stated, is in Hades; (6) The other is in the bosom of Abraham.

In this great section of Scripture, Jesus employs the use of the word "Hades" (verse 23). Vine states, "It has been thought by some that the word etymologically meant the unseen (from *a*, negative, and *eido*, to see), but this derivation is questionable; a more probable derivation is from *hado*, signifying all-receiving" (Vine, W. E., *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 187). Thayer defines this unseen or invisible world as "the realm of the dead, or the common receptacle of disembodied spirits" (Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 86). More telling perhaps is the word's Hebrew equivalent—"Sheol." The word "sheol" occurs sixty-six times in the Hebrew Old Testament and occurs mostly in the poetical section. The term was translated by those scholars who translated the Old Testament Hebrew into the Greek Septuagint by the Greek "Hades." Sheol is used in a variety of senses, all closely connected with death. Often used with the grave (Job 17:13-16; Psalm 141:7; Isaiah 14:11, et al.). Sheol is that unseen, all-receiving place, the dwelling place of those spirits, which departed their physical bodies in death.

Every person's spirit, upon physical death, goes into Hades, but the righteous go into one division and the wicked into another. Sometimes the word Hades is used only in reference to the place of torment (cf. Luke 16:23), and in other instances it is used to refer to the Hadean realm with its respective divisions (Matthew 16:18; Psalm 16:10, et al.). From the Lord's Words in Luke 16 and other New Testament references, God has revealed the existence of Paradise (Luke 23:43), or so-called by the Master, "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22), and that section of Hades which tormented the rich man. Though the King James Version mistakenly placed the Lord in "Hell" for three days (Acts 2:27), the New King James Version and many other more correct renderings translate the word "Hades," as it is in the original. If the Lord, therefore, was in Hades, was He in the presence of the rich man of Luke 16 or rather poor Lazarus? This query can easily be answered by the Lord's answer to the penitent thief: "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). The "Paradise" that the Lord here mentioned seems not to fit the description given of that place of torment and flame which plagued the rich man. Paradise is rather the place of the departed spirits of those men and women who were righteous in their physical lives or who passed away before reaching beyond the age of innocence.

The rich man's location becomes more clear when compared with the apostle Peter's statement: "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment" (2 Peter 2:4). The word here translated "hell" is the word *tartarus*. M. R. Vincent says that this word "represents the Greek hell, though treated here not as equivalent to *Gehenna* [The Greek word properly translated hell, but not employed here, ENM], but as the place of detention until the judgment" (Vincent,

Word Studies in the New Testament, 691). If the proper translation of this word is hell, one wonders what, if any, reason there would be for a judgment, if they were already in their eternal place of punishment. Second Peter 2:4 mentions Tartarus as the place where wicked angels are being held until the judgment, and it is reasonable to suppose that Tartarus is that part of Hades reserved for the wicked until their judgment. David Pharr commented:

Unless there are compelling reasons for concluding otherwise, a word in Greek should be understood as meaning what it would have meant to the Greek-speaking world of the New Testament times. We should, therefore, understand Peter's use of *tartarus* (translated "hell" in the KJV), to refer to what it ordinarily meant to the Greeks—a place of punishment for disembodied spirits. While the word *tartarus* itself is not used in the New Testament regarding the spirits of wicked men, the idea of such a place is clearly implied. We find it in Peter's statement about disobedient men, long since dead, whose spirits were "in prison" at the time Peter wrote (I Pet. 3:19f) (Pharr, *The State of the Dead*, 25).

One fundamental difference in the punishment of the Hadean realm and that of Hell (Gehenna) is that Tartarus is the punishment of those wicked disembodied spirits, whereas the punishment of Hell consists of both body and spirit. Jesus profoundly stated, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

The disembodied spirits of both the wicked and the righteous will dwell in the Hadean realm until that great call from He who comes with the clouds (Revelation 1:7) during the resurrection (John 5:28-29). The New

Testament gives much emphasis to the resurrection of the body (Romans 8:11; I Corinthians 15, et al.) and therefore implies that something, as far as rewards are concerned, is lacking without the resurrection. When the graves burst open, on that Day (John 5:28-29) eternal rewards will be given. Paul taught that the crown of righteousness will be given "on that Day" (2 Timothy 4:8), both to him and "all who have loved His appearing." We must conclude therefore that Paul has not entered heaven, for, claimed he, all will receive their reward "on that Day." It is apparent from many New Testament Scriptures that no one, except Jesus, has gone into Heaven. John wrote, "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven" (John 3:13). In fact, after the Lord's resurrection, He told Mary, "I have not yet ascended to My Father" (John 20:17). Though in the care and keeping of God, Jesus, during the period of time before His resurrection, had not yet ascended to heaven. For all others departed spirits, Hades will continue until the judgment, at which time it will give up its dead and death and Hades will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:13-14).

THE ETERNAL STATE OF THE DEAD: HEAVEN AND HELL:

That section of Scripture describing the great judgment (Matthew 25:31-46) ends with: "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (verse 46). Every man's reward will be consistent with his respective works (Matthew 16:27). Our Lord revealed that "there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known" (Luke 12:2). And no man will be exempt from his day before the throne of God (2 Corinthians 5:10; Acts 17:31). In our brief study of the eternal state of the dead, we shall consider the two possibilities in the order that our Lord used them in

Matthew 25:46: (1) everlasting punishment (Hell) and (2) eternal life (Heaven).

Seemingly inconsistent with His reputation as, no doubt, the most loving man in history, is the frequency of His mention and description of Hell. In eleven texts Jesus used the word *Gehenna*, rightly translated "hell." It is only used by one other New Testament writer, James, the half brother of Jesus. Undeniably, the most loving man of all time said more about hell than any other New Testament writer. Gary Workman commented:

The original and predominant New Testament term for "hell" is the Greek word *geena*. It represents the Aramaic expression *ge hinnom*, meaning "valley of Hinnom" (Neh. 11:30; cf. Josh. 15:8), and for this reason the word is commonly transliterated in English as *Gehenna*. This was a valley on the south side of Jerusalem where, during idolatrous periods under Ahaz and Manasseh, the Jews had caused their children to be burned as sacrifices to the god Molech or Moloch (II Chr. 28:3; 33:6). ...the area became known as a place to be abhorred...It was renamed by Jeremiah as "the valley of Slaughter" in a prophecy that associated it with punishment to be brought upon Jerusalem (Jer. 7:31; 19:6)...the name *Gehenna* began to appear in Jewish literature as a term for the place of final punishment (Workman, *Is There An Eternal Hell?*, 30).

Additionally, the Lord's description of this eternal abode of the wicked is more terrifying and more vivid than any other. Some, said He, would be resurrected unto "condemnation" (John 5:29). Many of His parables were occupied with descriptions of this place of condemnation. In His parable of the Dragnet, Jesus concluded, "So it will

be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:49-50).

Jesus described Hell as the place "where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43-44). These words are a quotation from the last verse in the book of Isaiah. The thought conveyed is that under normal circumstances, the flesh of the dead would be eaten by worms and when the flesh had been consumed completely, the worms would die. In that the worms do not die, the flesh is never completely consumed, hence an eternal punishment in an unquenchable fire.

In His teaching regarding Hell, seven times Jesus stated that those in hell would experience "the weeping and gnashing of teeth" (cf. Luke 13:28); being "cast out into outer darkness" (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). To be "cast out" means to be eternally separated from the presence of God and all of the blessings, which He bestows (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Matthew 7:23; 25:41). Perhaps an example of this "weeping and gnashing of teeth" is seen in the hopeless pleading of the rich man of Luke 16. Those in hell will forever be exiled from God, continually weeping and gnashing their teeth in their eternal reward. For such, "it would be good if he had never been born" (Mark 14:21).

Though the road to hell is busily traveled upon by the majority of mankind, there are many who will receive a reward far beyond our finite comprehension, an eternal home with God in heaven. One of the premiere and perhaps most loved and quoted passages is the Lord's comforting words to His apostles in John 14. Truly, among the sweetest words Jesus ever spoke must have been—"I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). The worst thing about Hell is one of the greatest things about Heaven, namely, its eternality. Whereas the fires of Hell are never quenched, the happiness of heaven never ceases. Peter

revealed that the child of God would receive "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4).

That place is a place where "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for he former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). Paul wrote, "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). In the last chapter of the book of Hebrews, Paul stated, "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come" (Hebrews 13:14).

CONCLUSION

In our feeble efforts to explore this grand topic, we have noticed, according to God's inspired Word, the three states of man's conscious existence: (1) fleshly, (2) intermediate and (3) eternal. Without a knowledge of the eternal punishment of sin and the eternal reward for those covered by the blood of the sinless Son of God, one could scarcely appreciate how terrible his sin must be and how truly glorious and loving our Savior is. Our Lord came to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He was "made to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21), "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). The eternal destinies of men are fixed only after death or the second coming of Christ. In our sometimes incapable hands is laid the opportunity to decide upon the fate that will be ours for all of eternity (Joshua 24:15). Choose wisely!

Lesson Keep
9/24/05
Keep
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the Truth!

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