

Redemption Through the Bible

Bible Study

A study of the Book of Matthew

Vol 2

By

Franklin **C**amp



Franklin Camp
(1915-1991)

Brother Camp was born in Munford, Alabama, in 1915. He began to preach in 1935. His father and grandfather were both preachers of the ancient faith before him. Both would be deeply pleased to see the great work that their son and grandson has done and continues to do by word of mouth and by the prolific pen he wields so mightily and magnificently. Brother camp attended David Lipscomb College and while there formed a lifelong friendship with brother Willard Collins. They were roommates in Lipscomb. He labored locally with the Munford, Alabama Church, his home congregation, for twelve years; Park Avenue in LaGrange, Georgia, for two

years; the church in East Gadsden, Alabama, thirteen years; began in 1962 at Shades Mountain congregation in Birmingham for some ten years; came to Adamsville Church in 1974 where he worked for some twelve years; went back to East Gadsden for two years and left in 1988; and returned to the Adamsville congregation until his death in 1991. Long ministries have steadfastly characterized his local ministries. His work of faith and labor of love among these churches have been fruitful and faithful. Since 1972 he has devoted his time to writing, lecturing, giving special lessons to Bible teachers, and holding gospel meetings throughout the country. "How to Study the Bible," "Evolution," "The Work of the Holy Spirit," and "Inspiration of the Bible" have been a few of the special themes on which he has lectured through the years. Much of Brother Camp's material has been made available through the years in book form or on cassette tapes and now on CD.

If you would like more information on this material contact:

Brother's Inc.
4207 Veterans Memorial Dr.
Adamsville, AL 35005

THE ROYAL REDEEMER

A study of the Book of Matthew

Volume II

By Franklin Camp

"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham...And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:1, 21-23)

Lesson 1

Parables of the Kingdom (1)

Lesson Text: Matthew 13

Background to the Parables

This is the first extensive use of parables that Jesus used. Previously in the Sermon on the Mount, He's already used some parables that Christians are as a city that's set on a hill, and the salt of the earth. These are short parables that He used in the Sermon on the Mount, but this is the first time that He's used them as extensively and as developed as they are in chapter 13.

"And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath" (Matt. 13:10-12 Here are some people that Jesus says had, and there are some that had not. Who are the two groups, and what makes the difference? In verse 13 He says, *"Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed..."* (Matt. 13:13-15). What's happened? It's not that it was impossible for them to understand, but *"their eyes they have closed."* We just saw an incident of that in Matthew 12, [which] is the background of what Christ is talking about. Jesus had performed a miracle. They did not deny that a miracle had been performed, good had been done, nor that a demon had been cast out. They did however closed their eyes to the fact that it was a demonstration that the kingdom of God was nigh in the miracle that Jesus performed. He was fulfilling the mission as foretold in the Old Testament. Instead of accepting that, they closed their eyes to it. They refused to see what was before their very eyes. God in the flesh (John 1:14), deity, and ultimate goodness (Luke 18:18-19) right before their eyes and what did they do? They closed their eyes, and said that's not goodness there, that's the devil working. That gives us the background of what Jesus is saying here in this chapter.

"But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear"

(Matt. 13:16). The first time that we found this word “blessed” was in Matthew 5. When He says, *“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given.”* Who are the ones that hath? The answer is found in those who have the attitude set forth in the beatitudes and in the Sermon on the Mount. They’re the ones that “hath.” They are the ones that are receptive; they haven’t closed their eyes. They’ve had open minds and hearts, and have been listening to what the Lord has had to say! They’ve been following Him! Who are the ones that have not? These in chapter 12. In fact, look back to chapter 9, the Scribes and the Pharisees are closing their eyes and refusing to see what’s before their eyes. When Jesus performed a miracle on the Sabbath day, they condemned Him. When He healed a man and said, thy sins be forgiven thee, they called it blasphemy! They’re the ones that are closing their eyes, and because that, their ears are dull of hearing; they do not understand. Therefore, conversion is impossible.

A Good and Honest Heart

The different soils described and the different hearts that are set forth in this parable of the sower are the ones that are contrasted with those who have failed to have the attitude in Matthew 5. In describing the good heart, He said *“but other fell into good ground”* (Matt. 13:8). *“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty”* (Matt. 13:23). The man that has the good heart is the one that is honest. The Scribes and the Pharisees did not want the truth when Jesus taught it to them. They wanted their own way. Therefore Jesus begins to teach in parables, so that those who want to know and understand will understand. Those who do not want to know and do not want to understand will not understand. They’ll have eyes that see not and ears that hear not. I do not believe that I can emphasize enough the importance of having an honest heart that says I want to know what the Bible teaches. Whenever we read something from the Bible, and we resist that and refuse to accept and recognize it, we are walking on dangerous territory. We will end up being among those who have not because we have the wrong attitude. How can people read plain passages in the Bible and then try to find some way to dodge and get around them? Right here we’re told why. How could the Scribes and Pharisees stand and watch Christ perform that miracle, and look at it and say there’s the devil work? Because they resisted truth; they were not looking for truth.

Seven Parables, One Occasion

This is a unit, and according to Matthew's account, all of these parables were given at one time, *"And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables"* (Matt. 13:53). Therefore, there is a relationship between these parables. Since they were all given at one time, there are some things that are common in each of these parables. The things that are common in each parable need to be understood in the same way and the same manner in each parable. It would be strange that Jesus, in one lesson, would use several parables with common things and common language and it mean one thing in one parable and another thing in another parable. That would be misleading. There is the seed that is common, for example, in three of the parables. In the parable of the sower, there is the seed. In the parable of the tares, there is the seed. In the parable of the mustard seed, there is the seed. Would it not be likely then, that since Jesus used the seed in three of these parables, that it would mean the same thing and be understood alike in every one of them? Why would you think about interpreting the seed in the parable of the sower one way, and the seed in the tares another way, and the seed of the mustard seed another way?

There are other things that are common in the parables. For example, in the parable of the sower He mentions birds (Matt. 13:4). If you look at the parable of the mustard seed: *"Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof"* (Matt. 13:32). Should we interpret birds in connection with the parable of the mustard seed different from the birds in the parable of the sower? I don't think so, and yet, generally that's the case. For example, in the parable of the sower when it says the fowls came and devoured them, you have a picture of someone that is an enemy of the seed. Jesus interpreted the parable of the sower, so there's no misunderstanding about that. If that's the case in the parable of the sower, why may not that be true also in the parable of the mustard seed? Therefore, birds in the parable of the mustard seed indicate enemies rather than as is sometimes suggested.

Little Prepositions

The parable of the sower shows the importance of some things by some little prepositions. In verse 4, *"And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side."* *"Some fell upon,"* (Matt. 13:5) not by, but upon. *"And some fell among,"* (Matt. 13:7). Look at verse 8, *"But other fell into."* These

prepositions show the difference in the relationship of the word to the various hearts included in this parable.

Four Soils, Four Hearts

In the first example, the word “fell by”. Suppose that you stick your Bible in your pocket. You have it by your side, [but] you never take it out, never read it, [and] never study it. How much good do you think that’s going to do you? *“And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up”* (Matt. 13:4). If you just carried the Bible with you in your pocket, false teaching of every kind could be offered, temptation to sin, and there’s nothing to keep you from going in that direction. That’s a warning for us to be careful about how we listen to what’s taught! How many lessons are taught that only fall by the way side? They don’t ever get on the inside. What comes from that? There’s no change in life; there’s no productivity as far as our spiritual life is concerned.

If you go back and look at the attitudes in Matthew 5, all of those contribute, not to the word merely falling by the way side, but getting on the inside. What would you think if you saw somebody planting a fall garden and they were dropping the seed out on the sidewalk somewhere? You’d say, “What are you doing?” “I’m planting a fall garden. I’m planting turnip greens, collards, onions, shallots, or whatever.” You’d say, “Don’t you know you can’t grow a garden that way? That’s not going to get down to the soil.” Is that the way we listen to the word of God, study the word of God, or read the word of God? If so, then it’s not going to stay in our mind. How long do we keep what we read and what we study? We need to remember what we read, and if not, then we are as described here.

Second, *“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth”* (Matt. 13:5). *“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it”* (Matt. 13:20). Here is the impulsive, emotional fellow. Religion is emotional, but first of all it’s intellectual. Our minds need to be instructed. That’s the reason the great commission says, “Go ye therefore and teach,” and “Go into all the world and preach.” It didn’t say, “Go ye therefore and stir folks up.” It didn’t say, “Go ye therefore and get people emotional,” but rather, go teach them. Whenever we make decisions purely on an emotional response, generally we don’t make the right decision because we haven’t thought it through. When our emotions get the upper hand, our intellect and our mind, usually, are thrown into neutral. If you don’t believe that, try to make a decision

during an emotional crisis. If you are able to make a decision during that time, it's not likely you'll make the right decision. Jesus said, whenever a person is just under the impulse and the influence of some personality, gets carried away, and then responds to the word, it's not going to be lasting. That's not to say our emotions are not involved, but our mind must be taught as well. When we've done wrong and our knowledge of God's Word, tells us that we've done wrong and that our influence has hurt the church, then our intellect ought to lead us, our emotions and our heart, to be broken over sin. When our heart's broken over sin, then we'll respond.

"Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matt. 13:21). There's no depth as far as this man is concerned and therefore, no conviction. When he's guided by emotion, he's not going to stick with it. When one is guided by conviction that something is right and because it's right I'm going to do it, tribulation and other things is not going to cause him to give it up.

Third, *"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful"* (Matt. 13:22). This reminds us that we must make room for the word. The first part of the parable of the sower does not say that "the kingdom is like," it just starts off and says that a "sower went forth to sow." Here you have a picture of Christ coming in to the world. He was the Word of God and is the Word of God, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (John 1:1). He came into the world and began His teaching, and then you have His interpretation of what's taking place though the principles in this parable apply all the time. Today there are people just like the ones that are described here. It's my judgment that this parable had its first application to the generation that Jesus was talking to. He said *"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended"* (Matt. 13:20-21). [In John 6], Jesus fed the multitude, and they wanted to make Him king. He refused to allow them to make Him king and began to do some spiritual teaching. He began to point out that He was that Manna that came down from Heaven. As a result of what Jesus was teaching, *"many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him"* (John 6:66). The fact that this took place during the personal ministry of Christ does not mean that the same thing does not happen today because there are people that accept the Bible from an emotional [standpoint] or

give it an emotional reception. It's not based on conviction, and they don't last.

There were those that received the seed in the good ground. Followed Christ all the way through, and you have people going with Him all the way to the cross. Following His resurrection, you have the appearance of Christ to a limited number of people recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There was a struggle that went on during the time. As Christ was trying to teach the people, the Scribes and the Pharisees were doing all that they could to keep them from receiving His teaching. We've already seen this as the struggle has developed in the book of Matthew, and in chapter twelve the conflict became open. They are now going to continue to try to press the matter and to keep people from receiving what Christ is teaching. Satan then, working through these leaders is trying to defeat Christ establishing the Kingdom of God. In the temptation (Matt. 4), if Satan had succeeded in leading Christ into sin, there would have never been a kingdom. When Christ resisted the temptation, Satan left him, but he did not to refuse to continue the struggle. Here it's continuing through the Jewish leaders. When we come to chapter 16, we'll find that Peter will become a part of the struggle. Peter became an instrument of Satan in trying to tell Jesus not to go to the cross. This struggle then develops throughout the book of Matthew.

The Wheat and the Tares

"Another parable put he forth unto them saying, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him 'Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares?' He said unto them, 'An enemy hath done this.' The servants said unto him, 'Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?' But he said, 'Nay, lest while we gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.'" (Matt. 13:24-30). That's exactly what Matthew 3:10-12 says, that He's going to separate the wheat and the chaff. The principle is true that that's always being done; God always separates the wheat and the chaff. When the nation of Israel went into captivity, God separated the wheat and the chaff. The wheat returned in

penitence and confession, [but] the rest of the nation never did turn. In the book of Matthew, it has reference especially to the separation of the Jewish nation, which claimed to be the people of God and the church. The nation of Israel was intended to be a peculiar nation; they had been God's people. Beginning with the church at Pentecost the question comes up, as far as the Jews are concerned, who now are the people of God – the church or the nation of Israel? The nation of Israel insisted that they were God's people and opposed the church until; finally, the temple was destroyed. The destruction of the temple was God's way of saying, "I am leaving nothing but the church. The nation of Israel is no more." Paul said the church is "*the Israel of God*" (Gal. 6:16). If you look at the book of Acts, you will see that this is what takes place. In Acts 5, you have some of the tares in it. Look what God did With Ananias and Sapphira, God separated them and took them out. [In] chapter 15, you have the question of Judaizing teachers. They are upset because Peter ate with Gentiles (Acts 10). They called him on the carpet (Acts 11). All of that's explained, and then we have the beginning the church at Antioch and Paul's missionary journeys. The problem begins to develop with the Jewish people over Paul's preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles and placing them upon the same level as the Jews. So you have the conference then in Acts 15. These are people that are trying to take over the church (Acts 15:1). Here is the struggle that started with Christ and the Scribes and Pharisees, and is now continuing with the apostles, in particular with the apostle Paul. The book of Acts gives us a picture of what Christ is talking about in this parable of the tares (cf. Acts 21:20). The destruction of the temple separated and put an end to the matter of their claiming to be God's people and still holding on to the Law of Moses. When the Jewish nation was destroyed, that is the temple, that didn't leave anything but the church.

"He answered and said unto them, He that sowed the good seed is the son of man (That is Christ). The field is the world (He came in to save the world and not just the Jewish nation). The good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one" (Matt. 13:37-38). Look at some other passages now that throw some light upon this (2 Thess. 2:3, 9-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-5). All the way through the epistles you have a picture of the struggle that is developing. He said, "*The enemy that sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, (our Bible says world), the reapers are the angels (that is, God's messengers)*" (Matt. 13:39). The Roman authorities became God's messengers. If you turn to Matthew 24, you will see that the word angel there is used in reference to earthly messages. If you turn to the book of Revelation, you

will see the same thing to be true, “unto the angel of the church of Laodiceans.” That was not a heavenly being, but an earthly being. The word angel simply means messenger, and the context determines whether or not it’s a heavenly being.

“The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:41). The first application of that would be what happened when the Jewish nation was destroyed. Of course, the principle is true. Here is a problem that they had that we have seen from the very beginning. Beginning with Cain and Abel, in Cain you have a counterfeit righteousness and in Abel you have true righteousness. In Cain [you have] one that persecuted one that is righteous. There is the struggle. It began there, and it did not stop all the way down through the Old Testament. It continued when Christ began His work, and it continues today. In the midst of that, there are always things that are imitations. The kingdom of God had its beginning on Pentecost. Look at the imitations you have scattered around the world. Where did they all come from? That’s the enemy’s work. That is what Satan is doing. In the final judgment all of that will be separated. The tares and the wheat will be separated in the final judgment.

Read the Text

1. “And he spake many things unto them in _____, saying, Behold a _____ went forth to sow.”
2. “For whosoever _____, to him shall be _____, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath _____, from him shall be _____ away even that he hath.”
3. “But he that received seed into the _____ ground is he that _____ the word, and _____ it; which also beareth _____, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”
4. “That it might be _____ which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in _____; I will utter things which have been kept _____ from the foundation of the world.”
5. “The field is the _____; the good seed are the children of the _____; but the tares are the children of the _____ one.”

Research the Text

1. Make a list of the common things found in parables of Matthew 13.
2. Why did Jesus speak to the multitude in parables?
3. Give an example of some individuals who had closed their eyes to the truth.
4. Why is it important to keep in mind that all of these parables were given on one occasion?
5. What type of heart do we need in order to understand the Scriptures?

Review the Text

1. List the four prepositions that describe how the different hearts of men receive the word of God.
2. Give a biblical example that illustrates each of the four soils in the parable of the sower.
3. List the various things in the parable of the wheat and the tares and what they represent.
4. Discuss why obedience to the word of God requires both intellect and emotion.
5. What are some practical lessons that can be learned from the parable of the sower and the parable of the wheat and the tares?

Lesson 2

Parables of the Kingdom (2)

Lesson Text: Matthew 13

The Grain of Mustard Seed

“The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all seeds but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs and becometh a tree so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof” (Matt. 13:31-32). The general explanation of that parable is that the kingdom of God started off small, like a mustard seed, and that it spread throughout the earth. That may be what that parable is teaching, yet I have some questions in my own mind in view of what is here if that is what He is teaching.

In the first place, a mustard seed doesn't grow into a tree. There have been attempts to find some kind of tree that will represent a mustard [seed] that has grown into a tree, but in what I have read I haven't found anything that really justifies that. If you look at this parable in keeping with what has taken place in this chapter, you can see what has happened. For example, look at religion throughout the world today. What has happened? The kingdom that began at Pentecost has grown into a great tree throughout the whole world, but it is abnormal growth. That's not what God intended. When the bird comes, as it is described here, that is opening the doors for sinful men to find refuge and to cover up their sins in religion. If you don't believe that's true, just look at what is happening today. You find people that are defending all kinds of sins that are condemned in the Bible. Homosexuality is just the beginning of it. The kingdom of God was never intended to be a place of refuge for men to hide and hold on to their sins. It is a place where people get rid of their sins and live clean, pure lives.

What happened following Pentecost? Look at the church of Corinth. There was a man that was living in open adultery, fornication, and the church was puffed up and proud about it. Paul had to write the letter to try to get them to correct the problem. Look at what happened to the restoration movement. Men said, “Let's go back to the Bible.” It started out like a mustard seed and began to grow. It grew up to be like a mustard seed that had grown into a tree, and then look at the abnormal growth. Look at the things that were brought in to satisfy men – the missionary society, mechanical instruments of music, and other things. That's not just true of the restoration movement; that is true of religion in general. Look at a

congregation when it begins to grow. Unless it is really careful, the first thing you know it will begin to harbor sins. The reason would be because we want to grow big in numbers, and we forget about what our purpose really is.

Like Unto Leaven

“Another parable spake he unto them, the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened” (Matt. 13:33). This has often been used to say that the Gospel will leaven the world, and the Gospel is likened unto leaven. If that’s what is true, then this is the only place where the word leaven is used in a good sense. If you go back to the beginning of the Old Testament whenever the nation of Israel had its start (Exodus 12), they would put all of the leavening out of their house. [This was] symbolic of the fact that they would lay aside sin and become separated from all the sinful things round about them. The Passover was to be observed and leavening was to be put out of the house. They could not eat anything cooked with leaven during the time of the Passover, [also] called the day of unleavened bread. In Matthew 16 there is the word leaven, *“Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees”* (Matt. 16:12). Leaven was used in reference to false doctrine. *“And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod”* (Mark 8:15). Here you have materialism. *“Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy”* (Luke 12:1). Three times in the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke the word leaven [is used], and in every instance it is used in a bad sense. It’s used twice more in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians in reference to their hiding a corrupt man in the church, *“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be anew lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”* (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). He is telling the church at Corinth, *“You are allowing the leaven of corruption to enter into the church, and you need to get rid of that.”* In Galatians 5, *“Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”* (Gal. 5:7-9). He is talking about the leaven of the false teaching of these Judaizing teachers. Why would that not be the case then in verse 33 when He said, *“The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three*

measures of meal, till the whole was leavened?" That is when you allow corruption to enter in, unless it is corrected it will leaven the whole thing, and that is exactly what Paul said to the churches of Galatia. I have difficulty in studying the Bible in finding that the word "leaven" is always used where it had to do with a corrupting influence except one time. If we are going to let the Bible interpret itself, I think the Bible is consistent. [Leaven] is nowhere else ever used in a good sense but always of a corrupting influence in relationship to sin corrupting that which is right. I think that's what the emphasis is in this parable. How easy it is to start out to live the Christian life, but you just let a little leaven corrupt them, hide a sin, and see what that does to your spiritual life. If you leave it there, it will corrupt it. It will get a little worse and a little worse.

Fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecy

"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying, I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:35). In order to understand what's in this chapter, we need to keep in mind that it's being approached from the Old Testament standpoint. Verse 17 shows that when Jesus is giving these parables He's discussing it from the anticipation of what was said in the Old Testament, *"For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them."* There's anticipation for things that have been announced by type, prophecy, promise, and purpose in the Old Testament.

Treasure Hid in a Field

Generally this parable is interpreted to show the importance of the kingdom – that we ought to give up anything for it. While that principle is true, I have reservations as to whether or not that's what this parable is talking about. *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field"* (Matt. 13:44). Keep in mind what Jesus has been talking about. In this very chapter He [said], *"For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes they have closed"* (Matt. 13:15). [In] chapter 11 He said, *"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and understanding"* (Matt. 11:25). There are those who did not want the truth as is pointed out in the parable of the sower, and that's the reason He spoke in parables because there was something wrong with

the way they were looking at it by the things that would be hidden from them. So, when the kingdom of God was set up on Pentecost, that very thing happened. The multitude of the Jews never did see and appreciate what the kingdom was all about. It's my judgment that the emphasis is that Christ is the One that bought it. He's the One that did the buying. He came into the world to buy [it], and in fact that's what He did.

A Merchant Man

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matt. 13:45-46). Think about the fact that Jesus gave up heaven – that's what Philippians 2 says – [and] came into the world, and bought the church (Acts 20:28). The very same word that's used here is used [in] 2 Peter 2:1. There are those who deny the One that bought them. Thinking about it from that standpoint, we have here the preciousness of the kingdom of God from the standpoint of God's divine purpose. [We have] how God looked at the church and how God appreciates the church. One of the first things we learned was Matthew 5:3 – men stood before God spiritually bankrupt. We didn't have anything to buy with. It seems to me that it would encourage the wrong idea to talk about somebody selling and buying something as though it could be purchased from the human standpoint. The purchasing was from the standpoint of the divine side. Now let me point out two things in this connection. Here we need to remember the value and the preciousness of the church from the divine standpoint – how God is interested in it. God's people have always sustained to Him a special relationship, and God had a special attitude toward them. *"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine"* (Exo. 19:5). There's the idea that the nation of Israel was a peculiar treasure unto God. In fact, the word peculiar means personal possession, something that belongs especially to God. The nation of Israel was something that He treasured because that was something that He had bought Himself. *"For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth"* (Deut. 14:2). [In] Deuteronomy 32:6 you have the idea again of the nation of Israel being bought, *"Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee and established thee?"* *"For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his*

inheritance. He found him in a desert land and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye” (Deut. 32:9-10). “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels” (Mal. 3:16-17). Keep in mind that this is a prophecy pointing toward the New Testament. In Matthew 21:38, “But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, this is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.” If you turn to the book of Ephesians, you will find that the church is the Lord’s inheritance. Ephesians 1 goes back and comes all the way down from the past to the present, and in verse 18 it stated the fact that the church is God’s inheritance. In Titus 2:15 and 1 Peter 2:4, God’s people are called a peculiar people. The church is God’s prized possession. That’s something that God treasures above everything in this world. The church is His holy nation (1 Peter 2:4). What you have in Matthew 13 then, in the parable of the pearl and the treasure is the emphasis God places upon the church. It is bought by the blood of His Son. It is considered above everything else that He has in this world. We ought to appreciate it that way. We hear it sometimes today there are those who do not seem to appreciate the church a great deal. These two parables should help us appreciate the value of the church because it is presented from the divine standpoint.

The Parable of the Net

Again in verse 47, you have the parable of the net. This is similar to the parable of the tares. This parable shows the dangers of there being those who are brought into the church who lack understanding and appreciation of what it’s all about. There will come a time of separation just as in the parable of the tares. The important thing in connection with this parable is, “What do I represent in this parable?” Do I belong to the good fish or to the bad fish? Am I the kind that God will accept? The answer to this will be found when we go back to Matthew 5, 6, and 7 to the attitudes that are formed out of the Sermon on the Mount. The attitudes and the values that we develop allow the Gospel to remold and remake our lives so that we think like the principles that are set forth in the Sermon on the Mount. [This] will determine whether or not we belong to the good or the bad.

Have Ye Understood?

“Jesus saith unto them, have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, yea, Lord” (Matt. 13:51). The word “understood” literally means have you been able to put together everything I’ve been saying. Have you been able to take these things and put them together? They said, “Yes, we understand; we’ve been able to put it together.” Of course, their knowledge was limited as we know at this time, but they’ve been able to put it together enough that they continued to follow Him all the way through to the cross and then until His ascension. There’s certainly a sense when they said yes we understand what you’re talking about that they certainly did understand.

Scribes Instructed Unto the Kingdom

In view of the fact that the apostles will be the ones that will be doing the preaching (they’ll be the Scribes that will begin in Acts 2), we have the statement that He made to them, *“Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old”* (Matt. 13:52).

First of all there were Scribes we read about in the Old Testament whose responsibility was merely the matter of keeping chronicles. That goes back to the period of the kings. They had the responsibility of listing the names and keeping the chronicles of the events that took place. But the kind of Scribes that Jesus talked about began with Ezra: *“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading”* (Neh. 8:8). That’s what a scribe’s work was during the time of Christ, and this would be the responsibility of the apostles. They would become the Scribes that would read from the Old Testament, and then they would give the sense of the Old Testament and cause people to understand. All you would have to do is turn to your Bible and read the book of Acts for example. In Acts 2, Peter quotes a number of passages from the Old Testament, and as a scribe guided by the Holy Spirit, he interpreted what those passages in the Old Testament meant. That’s the meaning of the phrase from verse 52, “which bringeth forth out of his treasure new and old.” The teachings of the New Testament were the unfolding, [or] the bloom, of what had been taught, promised, prophesied, and pictured in the Old Testament. That was the work of the apostles, and we don’t have any apostles today living. We have what they wrote. Those who teach need to be a scribe. They need to be able to read, to give the sense, and to cause the people to understand what the book teaches.

Jesus is pointing toward Pentecost. The apostles said we are able to

put this together. Jesus said when that day comes then you will be able to bring forth great things out of ancient history. It doesn't mean old and worn out. The word new doesn't mean something from the standpoint from which we think about it. It means new in character, kind, and quality. Therefore the quality that has been in the Old Testament will be unfolded so that people can understand it. Jesus said that He came not to destroy the law but to fulfill (Matt. 5:17). In Matthew 7:12, He pointed out that the golden rule is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. If you read the Sermon on the Mount, you can see what a fresh approach that was to what men had been thinking even to those who had been studying the Old Testament. That's what the kingdom of God is all about. It's a fresh approach in time and in character in changing the lives of men and in bringing them into the kingdom of God.

In His Own Country

Having finished that, He departs now and comes back to Nazareth. Remember that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and lived in Nazareth, which was way up in the northern part of Palestine among what was known as Galilee of the navy. He left Nazareth after He began His personal ministry and went to Capernaum, and Capernaum became the base of His operation. From the time He left Nazareth and came to Capernaum He had not been back there as far as His work was concerned. We read in chapter 12 how that He had pronounced what was going to happen to Capernaum because of their rejection of Him. Now He comes back to Nazareth. He's drawing towards the end of His ministry when He will soon go into Jerusalem and there be crucified. *"And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary and his brethren James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? When then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, a prophet is not without honor save in his own country and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief"* (Matt. 13:54-58). Remember the parable of the sower and the kind of attitudes that would be respected – open minds seeking to weigh things and determine things on the basis of whether or not it's true. You see immediately that's not their attitude. They say, "Why we know him. We know his people." What did that have to do with what He had done and what He was teaching? Did the fact that they knew Him and His people

mean that what He had done was not real and what He was teaching was not true? No. Their attitude was wrong; there was an attitude of familiarity. Look at the contrast with that attitude and the attitude that is set forth in the Sermon on the Mount, especially the beatitudes. If you go back and read the beatitudes, you will see what their saying is the very opposite of the attitude one must have in the kingdom of God. There's a danger also that we allow ourselves to get caught up in this same way. Familiarity can really become detrimental.

Let me ask you a few questions now so that we can determine whether or not we're like the folks in Nazareth. Is [the Bible] to you today a special and precious book like it's always been? Has our familiarity with it caused us to lose a sense of the preciousness of this book? Do I study and appreciate it like I did when I first began to learn the truth? Familiarity can dull our appreciation of the value of things. Think about the opportunity we have to study the Bible. How valuable do you count this period of time we have? Do we come with a hungry heart, anxious to know, learning things that will help us be better and grow? Those of us who had the opportunity of being brought up in Christian homes run the great risk of our familiarity with truth, and having heard it preached from the time that we grew up, of losing an appreciation for that truth. If you don't believe that, find somebody that's been out here in error and they come to the knowledge of the truth, and look at their appreciation of it. Young people let me warn you of the great danger of allowing the fact that you have Christian parents to cause you to lose sight of the wonderful blessing that you had of hearing the truth, studying the truth, and being in classes where truth is taught. Don't let it become so familiar with you that you lose the sense of your appreciation of it. We lose sight of the value of things when we become so familiar with it.

Familiarity can have a detrimental influence in the home. A couple marries; they decide they know each other. She knows me and I know her, and you kind of take things for granted. I don't need to tell her I love her; she knows that. If she doesn't she ought too. There was a time when you thought that needed to be said, and there might have been actions even then that enabled her to know if that were the case. We took the time to say something about it. This passage warns us about the danger of allowing familiarity to cause us to lose our sense of appreciation or value. Let us see that we do not allow familiarity to cause us to lose an appreciation for things that are worth having.

"And so, Jesus did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matt. 13:58). Look at what they could have enjoyed if they had not allowed their familiarity with Christ to keep Him from doing many

mighty works. The indication is He did some. Have you ever thought about the blessings we rob ourselves of because of that very point? Think of how much more the assemblies would mean if we looked at them from the standpoint I talked about in the beginning. Failure to keep that in mind will cause us to lose our appreciation of it. Think about how much we rob ourselves in Bible study because we lose a sense of the value of the Bible. Think about how much we lose in the home because we allow familiarity to rob us of some of the rich rewards that come by showing appreciation one for the other. Indeed, familiarity can be truly a detrimental thing, and it robs us of many rewards that will be ours.

Read the Text

1. "Another _____ put he forth unto them, saying, The _____ of heaven is like to a grain of _____ seed, which a man took, and sowed in his _____."
2. "That it might be _____ which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in _____; I will utter things which have been kept _____ from the _____ of the world."
3. "Which, when it was _____, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the _____ into vessels, but cast the _____ away."
4. "Jesus saith unto them, Have ye _____ all these things? They say unto him, _____, Lord."
5. "And they were _____ in him. But Jesus said unto them, A _____ is not without honor, save in his own _____, and in his own house."

Research the Text

1. What is the main point presented in both the parable of the treasure and the pearl of great price?
2. How is the word "leaven" used in this passage and in other passages of the Bible?
3. What determines whether one will be among the good fish put into vessels or among the bad fish thrown out onto the bank?
4. What was the work of a scribe during the time of Christ?
5. Why was it that Jesus did not many mighty works?

Review the Text

1. Jesus spoke in parables to fulfill Old Testament prophecy. What other things does Matthew point out concerning Jesus that are the fulfillment of prophecy?
2. Do you think the apostles fully understood everything Jesus had been teaching about the kingdom in the parables? Why or why not?
3. Discuss how familiarity can have a detrimental influence in religion as well as other aspects of life.
4. What is meant by the statement that the apostles would “bring out of his treasure things new and old”?
5. What can we miss out on because of unbelief?

Lesson 3

Herod, the Hungry, and the Horrified

Lesson Text: Matthew 14

Introduction

This brings us to the time of opposition. Problems are going to develop and have already been developing. We are going to see the opposition as it increases. As we look at this next section, we're going to see how they misunderstood the king. In the first part of chapter 14, we have Herod's mistake. Here you have a contrast of kings. In 1 Samuel 8, they said give us a king so we will be like the nations around about us. That's exactly what they had. He was a king in the sense that he was ruler over certain parts of Palestine. Herod was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau. Exodus 35 says that the sons of Esau became kings. That is they lived for sensual, temporal, and physical things. Herod is a further demonstration and illustration of what it means to follow the philosophy of Esau – give me something to eat today, because what good would spiritual things be tomorrow if I die today. In Herod you have a character that is weak. He's weak enough to take a man's life because of a request. Wherever you find a weak person in the Bible, you will find wickedness. Weakness and wickedness go together.

Herod the Tetrarch

Herod is a king in contrast with the kind of king that Christ is as we're studying about in the book of Matthew. Herod was a political king; he had become king through political maneuvering. Therefore you have a direct contrast between Herod and Christ. [Herod] had heard about the fame of Jesus, and he had already put John the Baptist to death. He thought this was John the Baptist raised from the dead. There are some that think that Herod was a Sadducee. Indeed if he was, here you have an occasion when he runs into problems in trying to deny the supernatural. He thought that John the Baptist had been raised from the dead [which] would have been a miracle if that had been true. They did not believe in angels and spirits.

There are several things that are of interest in relationship to the study of Herod. Weakness of character always leads to wickedness. Here is a man that was weak under the influence of his wife and the people that were around him (Matt. 14:9). The king was sorry that he got himself into a difficult situation and got carried away with what was taking place with the

dancing of Herodias' daughter. In the midst of that and before everybody that was there, he had made an oath so he said nevertheless for the oath's sake and them which sat with him at meat. He is confronted with standing by what he's said and taking a life or admitting that he made a mistake. You see the influence of those around about him. This is one thing that always happens when we allow ourselves to become spiritually weak – we are influenced by others. There's nothing wrong in our being influenced by others provided we take that influence and weigh it. Then [we] decide in our own minds that that kind of influence is right and legitimate. It's indicated that Herod knew better than this because [he] was sorry. Why was he sorry? Because he knew that he was now called upon to do something that would not be right. There's a price that we pay whenever we fail to grow spiritually, when we are influenced by people that we ought not to be influenced by. To be controlled by another person is a dangerous thing. I need to develop strength and conviction that enables me to live by my own conviction.

Herod showed that if you're going to be a Christian, you [have] to have strength to do it. Spiritual strength is not something that is magic; there are certain things that enter into the development of a strong spiritual life. There must be knowledge of the Bible. One cannot be strong unless he knows what the Bible teaches, because you will not know how to make proper decisions. One cannot be strong without faith, and faith rests upon divine testimony. One will not be strong without faith because it's faith that gives courage. A lack of faith causes a person to be afraid. We will see in this chapter where, because of a lack of faith, the disciples became afraid.

Note also from Herod how that sin affects our thinking. Here's a man that would not break his oath but instead would turn around and take a man's life. What kind of character do you call that? There's no justification for taking the life of John the Baptist, but that's what happens whenever we allow sin to dominate our lives. It affects our thinking, and it affects our ability to see things correctly. Romans 1 gives a list of the sins of the people that drifted away from the knowledge of God. Down in the lower part of that chapter it says that God gave them over to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:28). In the margin it says a mind void of understanding. They could not make a right judgment, and that's what sin does. It leads us to a place that we cannot make right judgment.

Herodias

What hope could there be for a world with women made up like that?

Think about a home where a young lady was brought up under the influence of a woman like Herodias where she will say, "I have something I want you to do." First of all, she used her sensual influence to influence Herod. Then her mother said, "I want you to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a charger." What chance would a young woman like that have under that kind of influence? Can we not see from this the value of home influence and the development of character?

The Death of John the Baptist

This is the only account that we have of the death of John the Baptist, and it's given to us in an incidental way. Is there not something unusual in the fact that John the Baptist, being the forerunner of Christ and his death being as it is, that the way the Bible records the account of his death is through Herod and Herod being upset? Had it not been for that we would not have known as far as the text of the Bible is concerned. Of course part of the reason is that John said himself, Christ must increase, and I must decrease. It was his purpose to point to Christ. He's been killed by Herod. Here you have the end of the work of John the Baptist and his disciples going to Christ. That's what the work of John the Baptist is all about. Think about the grave of John the Baptist as contrasted with the grave of Jesus Christ. The grave of John the Baptist ended his work, but the grave of Christ opened the door for the beginning of His work. There's a vivid contrast between them.

The Hungry

In order to appreciate this miracle in its fullest, [we] need to read John 6. John tells us as a result of this miracle they tried to make Him king (John 6:14-15), and Jesus turned it down. Matthew does not give us that account. Then John gives the account of Jesus taking the occasion for this to do some spiritual teaching. In that connection, we're told that many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. The people had a misconception of the kind of king they thought Christ was going to be. He had fed them, and they said why that's the kind of king we've been looking for so let's take Him and make Him king. According to the account that's given in John, we know that the miracles of Christ were signs intended to contain doctrinal teaching. When He fed the multitude He was trying to tell them in multiplying the loaves that [He] came into the world to provide the bread of life. Christ reminded them that He was a supplier for a hungry world. He came to fulfill their spiritual needs and not to provide merely the material

things of life. Jesus then gave to the disciples, and they in turn gave to the multitude. That's exactly what God intends for us. Jesus came into the world and provided spiritual food. He has given that food to the church, and He expects the church then in turn to be able to take that to the world. That was the responsibility of the disciples, and that's our responsibility.

There was a great deal of disproportion between the amount of resources that they had and the multitude that they fed. They had five loaves and two fishes. How would you feed five thousand people with that little bit? They could not do it out of their own resources. That is to remind us [of] the fact that the spiritual needs of the world cannot be met out of our own resources. That's the reason God sent Christ into the world to provide the resources that are necessary for feeding the hungry hearts of the world. All of them were fed, so the Gospel is adapted to the needs of all people. It doesn't matter who they were. There was not any in that multitude that was not included in those that were fed. There was a universal want, and there was a universal supply.

Look at how much they had left over, *"and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full"* (Matt. 14:20). Why 12 baskets full? [In the first place], there were twelve apostles. I suspect that there is some connection between the twelve apostles and the twelve baskets full. In the second place, the apostles will be the ones who would originally receive the Gospel and the spiritual food through which the world was to be fed. They ended up with more than they had to start with. That should not be misunderstood to say that just because I give a dollar to the Lord that means I'm going to get two or if I give ten, I'm going to get twenty. That's what some people are saying. The Lord [didn't] make that kind of promise at all, but there is truth in fact that the spiritual things that we give away, we have more than we did when we gave it away. Study the Bible and try to teach that to others; the more you give away the more you'll have yourself.

"It Is I, Be Not Afraid"

Matthew is the only one that gives us this account [of Peter walking on the water]. [Jesus] sent the multitudes away; the disciples cross the sea, and then He went up into a mountain apart to pray. The evening was come, and He was there alone. The ship was in the midst of the storm. First of all, it may be that Jesus is teaching His disciples the importance of their learning to live without His personal presence, because when He goes back to heaven they will go out with the responsibility of carrying the Gospel, but He will not be there physically and personally as He was.

The storm comes up, and Jesus waits, *"and in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea"* (Matt. 14:24). Why did He wait? There are times that God delays in order for us to be tested. We read at the death of Lazarus, when they sent for Christ He waited. That was a test of their faith. They said, He loved him, but John points out that He waited because He did love him. Sometimes Christ's delay is means of testing our faith, not proof that He doesn't love us. We sometimes say, "Why doesn't He do something now? Is it because He doesn't love me?" The answer is no! There's a reason for that.

Think about them in the midst of this ship and in the storm, and these are fishermen. Jesus comes to them in the midst of their trouble, and they saw him walking on the sea. They thought it was a spirit, and they cried out for fear. Jesus said, *"Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid"* (Matt. 14:27). That's one of the most encouraging statements anywhere in the Bible. We ought to learn to think about that and try to apply that in the various situations in life. If in the midst of the problems of life, I can hear Christ say, "It is I, be not afraid," surely things will be alright. If at the end of life's pathway I have been faithful in the service of my Lord and I can hear him say as I face the valley of the shadow of death, "It is I, be not afraid," that will remove the shadow and the darkness of death itself. Isn't that what He has promised? Is that not something that we should learn to try to develop within our minds and our thinking?

Has not the Lord promised that in the midst of your trials that He'll be there? Why not read that verse? Think about the promise that He has made. If you're about to fall beneath the load that's yours, hear Him say, "That even with your burden, it is I, be not afraid." That will enable you to realize that He is there to help you. Did not Peter say in 1 Peter 5:7, *"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you"*? If you're loaded with care today, hear Him as He says, "It is I, be not afraid. Cast your cares upon me." Can you not visualize the sense of relief that they must have felt whenever they heard that voice? That was the thing that caused them to realize who it was. Remember that when the disciples were alone in that ship Christ came to them. He did not intend to leave them alone. He came to provide what they needed. That same principle is true today. Whatever storm I may be in the midst of, Christ has promised that He'll be there, provided I am faithful in His service.

The Horrified

Peter walking on the water was an act of faith. Peter did not walk on

the water until first of all he had authority from the Lord to do it. It wasn't until Jesus said come and authorized him to that Peter was able to do that. This is a fundamental principle that is true in all areas where faith is concerned. It would have been impossible for Peter to have walked on the water without authority from the Lord, because he could not have done it by faith. It is impossible to do by faith what God did not tell us to do. This is something that it seems difficult for people to remember. In fact in chapter 15 we'll have the account of the Scribes and Pharisees walking by tradition rather than walking by faith. It had to be Peter that the Lord spoke to. Peter said, "Bid me to come to thee." Jesus then authorized Peter to walk on the water. He didn't authorize James or John or whoever else may have been on the boat. [What He said] only authorized Peter which is another way of saying that we have to determine what the Lord says to us and what He says to somebody else. This is merely the principle that has been emphasized in the proper division of the Bible. We don't build an ark because God did not tell us to do it. We don't offer animal sacrifices because the Lord did not tell us to do it. We do not use mechanical instruments of music, because the Lord didn't tell us to do it.

As Peter began to walk toward the Lord instead of walking by faith, he began to walk by sight. Verse 30 says, "*But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid.*" He is walking by sight and not by faith. That's where his problem came. Paul said we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Our real difficulties arise, and we find ourselves sinking like Peter did, when we begin to go by what we can see instead of walking by faith. Faith has to do with the unseen (Hebrews 11:1). My problem is I see things and my eyes tell me I can't rely on what the Lord said under the circumstances. When I begin to think that I cannot rely on what the Lord said in this particular situation that's when I begin to go down like Peter did. It's not easy for us to keep from making the same mistake that Peter did.

Peter's faith was broad enough to take in the water but it wasn't broad enough to take in the winds and the waves. When Jesus said come to me, Peter got down out of the boat, and he just walked right out on the water. Then there were the winds and the waves, and his faith wasn't big enough to take that in. Too many times our faith is kept to limited areas. We seem to place our faith in certain categories, and then when we find ourselves in certain circumstances we do like Peter did and we lay aside our faith and say it doesn't include this. Whenever that happens we begin to sink just like Peter did. We should learn that faith is not just one act, but faith is life long. Peter started out and took some steps; then his faith ran out. We should live every day, every hour, and all the time by faith. It is only then that we

can appreciate the meaning of it.

It may have been that Peter's faith turned into self-confidence. He started out by walking by faith and took two or three steps, and he may have thought look how well I am doing. That can happen sometimes. Because we start out to serve the Lord by faith and do pretty good we may get to the place where we think that we do not need the Lord's help. We don't stop to say, "What is it that the Lord would have me to do? How would the Lord have me to act under certain circumstances?" Whenever that happens then we'll find ourselves in difficulty as Peter was.

Peter took some steps by faith – he walked on the water. If he could take that many steps by faith and walk on the water, what was to keep him from just keeping on walking by faith and taking steps by faith? If he had thought about the fact that faith has enabled me to walk this far, then faith will enable me to keep on going. If I can do some things by faith, then it means that I can do others things by faith. It ought to be an encouragement. Think about the situations that you may have been in and your faith got you through that situation. That being true when we find ourselves in situations again why could we not stop and think, "I was in a situation and my faith worked for me and pulled me through in that instance. If it did it then, it will do the same thing now." Our faith may be encouraged by the realization of the times that we have relied upon our faith, trusted God, and have been rewarded by placing our trust in Him.

Faith makes unusual people. What is it that made [Peter] different from the rest of the people? Here were the rest of the disciples on the boat, and they are not walking on water. Here is Peter doing something that is unusual and out of the ordinary. In this instance it was a miracle. A miracle is not performed today, but the principle is still true. Faith makes unusual people. It takes things that are ordinary and changes them to things that are more than just ordinary. There are numerous examples of that. Take for example David as a young lad. What was the difference between David and all the other people that saw Goliath? The answer is his faith. He said that Goliath is defying not Saul, nor Israel, but God. Why didn't anybody else see that? Why didn't Saul see that? Saul was back just like an ordinary fellow scared to death. Even David's brothers were laying back; they were afraid to do anything. They were just ordinary people. When David went out to meet Goliath he said, "I don't come to you in my own strength but I come in the name of the God of Israel." That's what made the difference. The people that do not live just ordinary lives are people where faith makes a difference.

Peter walking on the water reminds us that faith will do what others

dare not try. All through the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews you find people doing what other people would not dare to try. There is Noah building an ark. No doubt in the minds of many people it looked silly. There is Abraham leaving his country going into another. In fact, he did not know where he was going. Go on down through the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews and you will find a list of people who were different because of their faith.

Faith can do what is otherwise impossible. One of our problems many times when we say I can't is that we don't believe that we can. Have you ever done things that you thought you couldn't do but then you decided you would try it and you believed that you could? That makes a difference. We can do many things by faith that we would not think that we could do otherwise. Without faith Peter would not have been able to walk on the water. The same is true as far as us. Listen to Matthew 6:33 *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."* We think well I just can't do that, but faith will enable us to do what we cannot otherwise do.

Peter's faith enabled him to be like Christ. That's what faith does. Faith will make us Christ-like in our disposition and attitudes, in our interests and our ambitions, and in our concerns and our desires to do the will of God.

The Hand of Jesus

When he began to sink, notice his cry, "Lord, save me." What's the reply? Immediately, Jesus stretched forth His hand. One of things that [we learn] from the book of Matthew is that to receive anything from the Lord begins with a sense of need. Wherever there is a sense of need and the desire to obtain what the Lord has, He is anxious and ready to provide that. I'm afraid that many of the blessings of the Lord are never received by me because I don't have that deep sense of need. As a result of what has taken place we learn that they worshipped Him and said of a truth, "Thou art the Son of God."

Read the Text

1. "And said unto his _____, This is John the _____; he is _____ from the dead; and therefore mighty _____ do shew forth themselves in him."
2. "And the king was _____: nevertheless for the _____ sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he _____"

it to be given her.”

2. “And Jesus went forth, and saw a great _____, and was moved with _____ toward them, and he _____ their sick.”
3. “And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the _____, and took the _____ loaves, and the two _____, and looking up to heaven, he _____, and brake, and gave the loaves to his _____, and the disciples to the _____.”
4. “But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of _____ cheer; it is _____, be not _____.”

Research the Text

1. Why did Herod think Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead?
2. Why had Herod previously refrained from killing John the Baptist?
3. What was the process through which the multitude was fed?
4. How did Jesus approach the apostles, and what was their response?
5. What happened to Peter when his focus shifted from Christ to the boisterous winds?

Review the Text

1. What are some lessons that can be learned from Herod?
2. Compare the grave of John the Baptist with the grave of Christ.
3. Why were there twelve baskets full left over after the five thousand were fed?
4. How did the three groups in this text (Herod, the multitude, and the apostles) view Christ?
5. What are some lessons about faith that can be learned from Peter walking on the water?

Lesson 4

Transgressing Tradition and Gentile Territory

Lesson Text: Matthew 15

Transgressing Tradition

Chapter 15 begins, *“Then came to Jesus Scribes and Pharisees which were of Jerusalem, saying”* (Matt. 15:1). Remember Jesus was not in Jerusalem, *“And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret”* (Matt. 14:34) [which is] way up in the northern part, yet here comes a delegation of Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem. They are becoming concerned about the influence of Christ. They are now ready to take Him on and see if they can destroy His influence with the people so that they can maintain their hold. They begin by asking some questions to try to put Him on the spot. *“Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders for they wash not their hands when they eat bread? But he answered and said unto them, why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded saying honor thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightiest be profited by me, and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matt. 15:2-9).

There are several things about tradition that we should consider. Traditions may simply be a custom of doing, but whenever we take a tradition that may simply be a custom or method and exalt that to equal the commandment of God we have gone too far. All of us tend perhaps more than we think to be controlled by the way we have been used to doing things. The way that we do things is not the same as the commandment of God. For example, we gather in the assembly and we don't have any commandment of God as to how our service is to be arranged. We do have commandments of God as to what we are to engage in. Whether we have preaching first, prayer first, singing first, or singing last, whether we have a prayer to dismiss or a song to dismiss, there is not a word said about that. What would be your reaction if instead of a prayer of dismissal we had a song? Would you say that's not scriptural? Some of us might. [There's]

anything wrong at all in having the prayer, but my point is that we must always learn to distinguish between what is tradition, custom, method, and what is the command itself. If we don't, then we find ourselves in difficulty. Some of the problems that have arisen in the church have grown out of this very thing – deciding that certain things have to be done in certain ways when the Bible doesn't designate the way. It simply says that a thing is to be done. For example, [consider] the matter of caring for orphans (James 1:27). The Bible does not give a single specific commandment or direction as to the method of doing that. If I decide that here is a method and it must be done according to this method, then I have exalted the method to equal the commandment of God. We can become so accustomed to doing things in a given way until we decide that this is not just a way we can do it but this is a way that we must do it.

The word “transgress” means to step by the side of or to deviate. What they were doing were things that had been handed down for generations by the elders; the Old Testament doesn't say a thing about what they were insisting upon and therefore the problem. Here is something we should remember – religion ought to always come to us fresh from the Book. That's the only way to avoid allowing tradition to be exalted up to a commandment that God had given. Let us realize that the Gospel is intended to be adapted to every generation and to every country and to every nation and to all people.

When these people came down from Jerusalem, they wanted people to decide to do things like they did it in Jerusalem rather than by the Book. They didn't come to Christ's disciples and say, “Where does the Book authorize you to do what you are doing?” Their idea was that is not the way we do it in Jerusalem. Jesus had already in chapter 12 twice asked the question have ye not read what the Book said when they raised the question of His disciples violating their tradition concerning the Sabbath. He said you could read the book, and this is something that we should always do. Everything that is done should always be measured by the Book not how somebody else does it.

There is the question about why it was the disciples transgressed the tradition of the elders for they washed not their hands when they ate bread. This was not a matter of cleanliness; it was not merely a matter of washing your hands so they would not be dirty when you ate. It was a matter of ceremonial cleanliness, and if you turn to Mark 7:2 you find the word “defiled” used. “Defiled” was a ceremonial word under the law. There were certain things that were involved in relationship to being ceremonially clean so that they could approach God in worship. They had multiplied their

traditions. They washed their hands over and over not just in keeping with what the law said lest they had touched anything unclean in any way and thereby with their hands had become defiled. The very word “Pharisee” means separated one. They wouldn’t have anything to do with other people lest in touching or coming in contact with them they would be made unclean or defiled. They had their ceremonies that they went through. It was their ritual of washing their hands that separated them from other people. It was their ritual that separated them from other people and not their attitude. It is a solemn reminder that a simple ritual in and of itself is not what God expects to distinguish His people from other people. Ritual when it is the right ritual must be combined with right attitudes. These people that we are talking about are the very opposite of what we read about in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. It is true that to a great degree what we go through in our worship separates us from a majority of the religious world, but there must be something that goes with that. While we are in the process of doing that, are there attitudes in our hearts and lives that also distinguish us? If not, then we’ll find ourselves in the same category that these people were.

Jesus said, *“Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded saying, Honor thy father and mother; he that curseth father and mother let him die the death”* (Matt. 15:3-4). If you go back to the Sermon on the Mount, in chapter 5 Jesus said ye have heard it said, but I say unto you. That is the very point that He is talking about here. *“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you saying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matt. 15:7-9). Go back to the 29th chapter of Isaiah from whence this is taken and here is the background, *“Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed”* (Isa. 29:9-11). We are right back to chapter 13 and the parable of the sower – having eyes that cannot see. The real meaning of that book had been sealed up not because they didn’t see but because of attitudes. Wrong attitudes had closed their minds to seeing what it was all about. *“Which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord*

said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men” (Isa. 29:11-13). Their attitude toward God was based upon what men said not what God made known in His Word. What they did then was under the influence and the fear of men not out of respect and in obedience to God. In fact the ASV says *“there fear of me is the commandment of men which hath been taught them,”* and the margin says, *“which they had learned by rote.”* They had been taught to memorize some things, and out of the memory of these things there wasn’t an attitude of heart that should have come with what the Book taught. Is there not something in that for us to learn in reference to teaching our young people as well as teaching ourselves? Unless we are careful we may teach our young people to learn to say things by rote. That is takes faith, repentance, confession, and baptism to become a Christian while failing to teach them the attitudes that belong with them.

He said they honored Him with their lips, but their heart was far from Him. We are right back in Matthew 5. What about the heart? For example, in Matt. 5:22 Jesus said if you are angry with your brother, what is that? That’s an attitude. Suppose everything else is alright but you are angry with your brother, and then we go through our worship. We draw near to Him with our lips, but our heart is far from Him. Do you reckon there would be anybody that would worship just exactly as God says and their hearts are filled with hate as they go through that? That is vain worship. I think it is tragic that we have used this in talking about denominational error and innovations which is all correct but then stop there. The one that worships God with anger and hatred in his heart today will be no better off as far as his worship being acceptable unto God than a person that uses a mechanical instrument of music.

The seriousness of it is indicated, *“And He called the multitude and said unto them, hear and understand: not that which goeth in the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth; this defileth a man”* (Matt. 15:10-11; cf. Matt. 12:37). Vain worship comes not only from using the wrong kinds of things by which to worship God but it also comes from trying to worship God from wrong attitudes. It is easy to go through the right kind

of ritual and have the [wrong] attitudes because we do not think that much about it, and they are not that evident.

Then the disciples realized that what He had said had upset the Pharisees. The book of Leviticus authorized the eating of certain things. There was ceremonial cleansing that was in keeping with the Levitical system. When Jesus made the statement here, they would be ready to conclude that He was in direct conflict with what the Law said. That is no doubt one of the reasons that the disciples made the statement to Christ that they did that He had upset them. Then Jesus reminds the disciples, *"Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up"* (Matt. 15:13). The Pharisees and Scribes had formed a system of worship that was not in keeping with what God said. Here are people who had the Old Testament. They read and studied the Old Testament; they claimed they used it as their guide. Judaism was a God ordained religion, but even though they claimed that they were using the Old Testament and following the practice of Judaism they had so changed and altered what God had said until Jesus said it is altogether another system. Jesus says His disciples are to *"let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch"* (Matt. 15:14). The Scribes and the Pharisees were the leaders of that day. The conflict with Christ is beginning to develop. Jesus did not have any pity for those who were self-righteous and in error. The people that were in error and were honest and humble enough to be taught Jesus showed pity toward them. To the people such as the Scribes and Pharisees who refused to be humble and teachable He showed no pity for them at all.

"Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man" (Matt. 15:17-20). He did not say that what the Law prescribed about the matter of ceremonial cleanness was not to be recognized. What He is saying is they misunderstood the significance of the ceremonial cleanliness that God had prescribed in the Old Testament. They had come to see it only as an outward thing. Study the book of Leviticus, and you'll see that things in the book of Leviticus dealing with priesthood, sacrifices, the tabernacle, and its worship were intended to remind them of certain attitudes of heart and to emphasize the sinfulness of

sin all the way through. They had looked at these rituals as prescribed and failed to see what they were trying to say. Whenever you touch anything that is dead, you become unclean. That was a picture of what happens when you engage in sin. They had missed that altogether. So we raise a question, what is Christianity? Christianity involves certain rituals that we go through. There are certain items or acts of worship that we engage in, but these are to be an expression of what is on the inside. What is on the inside is to be the right attitude. When you read verse 18 and 19 of this chapter you are right back in Matthew 5 where He talks about the importance of a proper attitude. We should keep in mind that we can be blind, just as they were, to things that are true.

False religion blinds people. It can blind you to the nature of God. Calvinism teaches that before man was ever created a certain number of people would be saved and a certain number would be lost. Whenever man starts out with that preconceived idea, he'll never be able to understand the nature of God. When you raise the question of God being no respecter of persons they don't know how to answer that; they can't deal with it. We need to be careful that we do not allow false ideas to blind us to the nature of God because that is the very foundation of religion. False religion may blind one to sin. If we're not careful we'll so read the Bible that it'll cover our eyes and what's really sin won't be sin. Sin may blind one to his own needs. Pride is one of the chief sins. The proud fail to realize they have any need even though the first beatitude says blessed are the poor in spirit. False religion may also blind one toward truth. We should be real careful and be sure we try to study with honest hearts. We are back to the Sermon on the Mount and to the parable of the sower.

Gentile Territory

Jesus is now going to leave Palestine, and He is going out into Gentile territory (Matt. 15:21). Here is one that was a Canaanite; Mark says she was a Syrophoenician. The Canaanites lost the land because of their sinfulness (Lev. 18:24-30); the Jews did not get it because of their righteousness (Deut. 9:6-8). Now then at the time Jesus comes into the world the bulk of the nation has lost its way. Here is the Son of God, Deity in their midst, and they accused Him of blasphemy. Twice we have already read where they accused Christ of being guilty of blasphemy, but here is a woman who is outside of Palestine and is a Canaanite. What about her? Here you have a symbol that Jesus came into the world not just to save Jews but to save Gentiles. Here is something that projects itself down toward Pentecost and the universality of

the Gospel. This woman enjoyed the blessing of Christ because of her faith. Again showing that while the Scribes and the Pharisees had Abraham's blood in their veins lacking faith, opposing Christ, refusing to imbibe the attitudes of the Sermon on the Mount they are going to be cut off from these blessings because of their unbelief. Here is one that does not have Abraham's blood in her veins, one that had lived in the land of Canaan and her forefathers had been among the ones that were cast out because of their sins. Here is one [who], because of her faith in Christ, enjoyed the blessing that Christ extends to her.

"And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil" (Matt. 15:22). Notice she said have mercy on me. The beginning of obtaining blessing from God is recognition of our need (Matt. 5:3), so here is a woman that is poor in spirit. She does not come in pride like the Scribes and Pharisees but in humility asking for mercy. Note how she classified Christ. She said, *"Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David."* That's an interesting statement made by a Gentile. How did she come to the knowledge of the fact that Jesus was the Son of David living as she was way up here? That indicates some knowledge of the Old Testament. There is no way that I can see how that a woman that would be a total stranger living in total paganism having no knowledge of God's being in the Old Testament and even so having no knowledge of the Old Testament at all to think of Christ as the Son of David. This may well have been a proselyte of the gate – one that had come to the knowledge of God through the association either in the synagogue or whatever other means it might have been.

This woman comes to Christ begging mercy because of her love for her daughter. She said, *"Thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."* She is pleading for her daughter, but Jesus answered her not a word. The disciples wanted to get rid of her. Then Jesus makes the statement, *"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (Matt. 15:24). Because His work is primarily among the lost sheep of the house of Israel will He continue to overlook this woman and refuse to extend to her any blessings? What would you do with being turned off like that? What would be your reaction? Here you see a real test of character and a test of faith. Look at what she did. "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me." Watch what's happened. She said back in verse 22, *"thou Son of David."* No longer is she saying Son of David; she now says Lord, help thou me. That's unusual for one that seems to be overlooked and pushed back to say that. *"And he answered and said, It is not meet to take*

the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs" (Matt. 15:26). The word that is translated "dogs" means a little puppy. This shows that it doesn't sound harsh. I used to read that and think that the Lord was saying the Gentiles were dogs. She said I'm not denying that. Indeed that's the way multiple Jews looked upon them as dogs not just as little puppies as the word is used. Look at what she said, *"Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table"* (Matt. 15:27). This was not a wild scavenger dog running around eating; they are little puppies that ate the crumbs which fell from the table. Here were the Jews to whom the revelation of God had been given, their worship, their service, and the tabernacle, and in the temple, but there was a limited arrangement that the Gentiles had that they might approach God through Old Testament worship. Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple shows this truth (1 Kings 8:31-33). The Bible talks about the ones that are near and the ones that are far off. This language shows this woman recognizes that even though they did not enjoy the full light, the full blessings, and the full benefits that the Jews did nevertheless there were some blessings that God had even for them. Jesus admits that that is the case. *"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour"* (Matt. 15:28).

Here you have one that was unwilling to give up because of people that were prejudiced toward her. Look at her patience; she did not give up. I think sometimes when we become discouraged it is because we do not realize the depth of our need. If we did, we wouldn't give up because if we give up, then what? Here is a woman that had a little girl that was vexed with a devil. When the conversation took place with her and Christ, Jesus first of all didn't say anything. Second, He said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. That's enough to discourage anybody, but the life of her daughter was at stake. She didn't get discouraged because the life of her daughter was at stake. If we could learn that, it would help us overcome many of our discouragements. Just stop and think what is at stake. My soul is at stake. Am I going to sacrifice my soul because of discouragement?

"And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel" (Matt. 15:29-31). That shows that

He was in Gentile territory. Turn and read Mark 7:31 and Mark 8 which also gives this account, you'll find that Jesus went all the way up to Tyre and Sidon and came back down to Decapolis; that was Gentile territory. These healings are in Gentile territory. Here is the effect of what is taking place. It says that they glorified the God of Israel. That shows that they recognized that the God of Israel was not like pagan idolatrous gods.

"Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way" (Matt. 15:32). They continue with me now three days and have nothing to eat. Here you have an indication of the contrast between the reception that Jesus received among the Jews and beginning at Pentecost the reception that the Gospel received among the Jews and what He'll receive among the Gentiles. Here are the Scribes and Pharisees, who are the leaders of their day, trying to discredit Him. On the other side are Gentiles who have followed Him and been with Him three days. The indication is that they had not had much, if anything, to eat in that period of time. What a contrast! I realize that we are living in different times and situations, but when you think about people in other areas of the world whose opportunities are limited and the Gospel is brought to them and how they hunger and thirst for the opportunity of hearing it, it ought to make us stop and ponder about our own attitude.

What about these people that had continued now three days? Look at Jesus' concern for them. He realized their attitude. Then we have a second miracle, and this time He feeds four thousand. This time this miracle is among the Gentiles. *"And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full"* (Matt. 15:36-37).

Jesus now has seen the reaction of the leaders, the Scribes and the Pharisees, among the Jews and has seen the interest of the Gentiles. In the next chapter He will make a complete break with the Jewish leaders, and then He'll take His disciples apart and teach His disciples except as He comes into conflict and denounces the Scribes and the Pharisees.

Read the Text

1. "Why do thy _____ transgress the _____ of the elders? For they _____ not their hands when they eat _____."

2. "This people draweth _____ unto me with their _____, and honoreth me with their _____; but their _____ is far from me."
3. "For out of the _____ proceed evil thoughts, _____, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false _____, blasphemies."
4. "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O _____, great is thy _____: be it unto thee even as thou _____. And her daughter was made _____ from that very hour."
5. "And Jesus saith unto them, How many _____ have ye? And they said, _____, and a few little _____."

Research the Text

1. Why were the Scribes and Pharisees upset with the disciples of Jesus?
2. What had the Scribes and the Pharisees done by their traditions?
3. What happens to every plant which is not planted by God the Father?
4. Why was the Canaanite's daughter made whole?
5. How did the multitude in Gentile territory react to the healing miracles of Jesus?

Review the Text

1. What is vain worship? What are some things that can cause our worship to be vain?
2. To what things can false religion blind our eyes?
3. What are some lessons that can be learned from the woman of Canaan?
4. Compare the reception that Jesus had among the Scribes and the Pharisees to the reception He had among the Gentiles.
5. What are some similarities and differences in the feeding of the four thousand and the feeding of the five thousand?

Lesson 5

Christ and His Kingdom

Lesson Text: Matthew 16

Introduction

We have seen the opposition of the Scribes and Pharisees as they have continued to oppose Christ. This is the first time that we have the combination of the Sadducees and the Pharisees. They did not agree with each other. The Pharisees believed in spirits, angels, and the resurrection. The Sadducees were what we would call modernists. Later in the book of Matthew, we'll have the Sadducees coming to Christ and raising a question about the resurrection, trying to get Him involved in a difficulty about it, but here we see them combined. What we need to keep in mind is that Jesus is the promised Messiah. John introduced Him. There have been those that have been following Him. Even the Scribes and Pharisees were looking for a Messiah, but they were not looking for the kind that Christ had turned out to be. They didn't like His teaching. They didn't like what He stood for, and they didn't like His condemnation of their self righteous attitude. The Scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees are attempting to discredit Christ as the promised Messiah. They don't want people following Him as the Messiah. That opposition is going to continue until finally it will lead to His crucifixion.

A Sign

They said, "We want a sign from heaven." They did not deny that He had been performing miracles, but they thought of these as being signs of earth and not necessarily one that would confirm Him as the Messiah. That's the reason they asked that question. They [also] asked it in order to discredit the signs that He had already performed. Remember back in chapter 12, when He had performed a miracle, rather than admitting that it was a miracle from God and that the significance of it was that the kingdom of God had come nigh [which] would indicate the Messiah was here, they said that He [had] done this by the power of Beelzebub. They are not denying that He's doing miraculous things, but what they're trying to say is that it was lying signs and wonders. In so doing, it would discredit Him as the promised Messiah.

Notice, He said [they] cannot discern the signs of the times. The signs of the times had to do with the fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel. Daniel

[prophesied] about [things that would occur] during the times of the Gentiles, the coming of the Messiah, and other things in connection with that. Christ was fulfilling everything that the Old Testament said, but they were unable to accept it. The reason that was true was because of the wrong attitudes as is set forth in the parable of the sower. He said there'll only be one given you and that'll be the resurrection from the dead. He referred to the sign of Jonas.

This brings about where Christ is going to leave the Scribes and the Pharisees and not continue to try to reach them. His discussions with them will be that of condemnation. He's going to begin talking with some other people and then finally spend His time with His disciples. We ought not to read, *"And he left them and departed,"* (Matt. 16:4) without being reminded of the danger of closing our minds and hearts to evident truth. It ought to teach us the importance of being honest and wanting to know the truth! Let the Bible teach what it will teach, and let that be what it'll be whether it pleases me or not. I ought to be interested in pleasing God! All I know that pleases God is what He's made known in His Word. I don't need to come to the Bible with my mind already made up and decide this is what I want the Bible to say. That's what they were [doing]; they wanted the Messiah to be a certain kind of person [and] to do certain things. They were thinking about an earthly king. They were thinking about their traditions and the things that they had set up. He didn't fit that and when He didn't, they rejected Him.

Beware of the Leaven

Again we see the danger of our having the wrong framework of mind (Matt. 16:6-11). We need to learn to listen carefully to what is said. Jesus said, *"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees"* (Matt. 16:6); He didn't use the word "bread." Watch how they read into [it] what He didn't say. *"And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread"* (Matt. 16:7). Why would they read bread into it? This is what happens when we come to study certain passages. If we don't let it say what it says, we tend to read into it what's not there. Leaven doesn't mean bread. Leaven may be associated with bread, but if He'd been talking about bread, He would have said, "Take heed, beware of the bread of the Pharisees!" This is a common problem that all of us face – the difficulty of reading the Bible and not allowing our previous attitudes [or] wrong attitudes to mold our thinking and cause us to see things there that are not there. When that happens we are making the very mistake that they made.

They had failed to remember (Matt. 16:9-10). Our forgetting gets us into trouble. Then He explains to them, *“How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees”* (Matt. 16:11-12). Up until this time, He had simply been refuting what the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees had taught. Now He comes out clearly and says you need to stay away! That’s dangerous doctrine and you need to think about it!

Christ and His Church

Jesus raises the question, “What are people saying about me? Do they see me as the fulfillment of the Old Testament?” The answers that were given showed that they did not recognize Him as the promised Messiah. They thought about Him in various ways and of unusual men in the Old Testament. Not a single answer that was given would show that they understood He was fulfilling the Old Testament! This shows the conflict between Christ and the Scribes and Pharisees. The religious leaders, evidently, had succeeded in keeping the people from accepting and believing that He was the promised Messiah. There was Jeremiah, who was a man and a prophet. There was Elias, who was a man and a prophet. John the Baptist was a prophet, and with all that that meant that’s insufficient. *“He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matt. 16:15-16). The Christ there stands for the Messiah. They said, “We see you not as John the Baptist, Elias, or Jeremias [but] as the promised Messiah!” They see that the promised Messiah was more than just a man. He’s not only the Messiah; He is the Son of the living God! Here is the difference between the Scribes, the Pharisees, and those who had listened to them, and the disciples who, with open minds and hearts, had been following Him and trying to accept His teaching.

Here are those who say that Christ was Jeremiah, John the Baptist, or Elias. Why was it that that was all that they saw? The solution of the problem is found in the difference in the attitudes that are expressed and set forth in the Sermon on the Mount. Had there not been the revelation from heaven when Jesus was baptized? Surely there had been! Had there not been revelation by His own action, by His own work, [and] by the miracles that He did? Surely there had! They did not discover out of their own wisdom that Christ was the Son of God. That was a divine revelation

(Matt. 16:17)! We don't discover the truth that saves; we don't discover the truth about Christ. That comes by revelation. The reason that the others had not seen it [was because] they were guided by their own wisdom. They did not have the proper attitudes.

Of course there are those who say that Peter is the rock on which the church is built, but it's quite clear that that's not true. There are different words in the Greek which is not made manifest in the English. The truth of the matter is the word rock is never applied to man anywhere in the Bible! It's always, without exception, applied to God! Go back in the Old Testament and look it up. Jesus is that rock because He's deity! It's upon His divine being; the fact that He's God is the rock upon which salvation rests. The church was to be built upon the fact that Jesus was the divine Son of God.

Sometimes we get lost in the meaning of "church" because when we think about the church, we think about it entirely from an institutional standpoint. It involves more than that. The church is not a building. It's not made up of rocks; it's made up of people. When Paul persecuted the church, he persecuted people (Acts 8). My church literally means my people [or] my assembly. It also means people that are under my authority (Eph. 1:22-23). It belongs to Him. When I say the church belongs to Him, let me not lose sight of the fact that that means if I'm a Christian, I belong to Him! I can think about it collectively and think about what the church ought to do without ever thinking about that means what I ought to do! There's a danger in that, and when we allow that to happen we fall into the very trap that the Scribes and Pharisees got into.

The word church means the called out [or] the separated. What makes them a separated, called out people? We are right back in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. That's what makes us separated people! The church is the called out; it's the God ruled and directed people in this world! They're different in their ideas, aspirations, and attitude. They don't live for the same things that other people live for; they have other purposes.

He said, *"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matt. 16:18). There have been different ideas about that. There have been those who have said that the church would always be here. There's also the idea that it means that Hades would not keep Christ from building the church. In view of the conversation that follows, the real thrust of it is that Hades will not be able to continue to hold men in their bondage because the building of the church and what goes into the building of the church is going to free men from the hold and the bondage of Satan and sin!

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19). That is merely a statement in reference to apostolic authority. Catholics say that that applied to Peter and to nobody else, but all you [have] to do is turn over to chapter 18 and the same promise is made to the twelve. The keys stand for authority. For example, Jesus said that [He had] the keys of death and Hades. That meant that He had the power to control and to unlock – the authority. John’s account of the great commission says that Jesus breathed upon them and said, *“Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained”* (John 20:22-23). That’s exactly the significance of this passage here.

Christ’s Mission

He’s going to give additional light as to what His mission in the world is all about (Matt. 16:21). You can see why it is that He left them and departed (Matt. 16:4). He knew what their attitudes were, what their determination was, and what His mission was, but it’s not yet time for that to take place. There’s some other work that needs to be done. There’ll need to be time spent with His apostles in order to train them and prepare them for the work that He is going to do. He announces that He is going to be killed, but He also adds that He’ll be raised the third day. Every time Jesus mentions His death He always mentions His resurrection. We learn from this that one of the ways to face some of the difficulties of life is to see beyond the difficulties. One of the reasons that Jesus was able to face His mission as He was [was because] He saw beyond the cross! When we allow our sight to become limited by the difficulties that we face and not see beyond that, we’ll always have problems. We must learn to do what Jesus did, He didn’t just see the cross, He saw beyond it.

Here we strike at a note that is the problem for all of us – the cross. Peter could not see the cross; he could not conceive of Christ being crucified. I have come to believe that the most difficult proposition of the Bible is the proper understanding of the cross itself [and] what it signifies. We think about the cross signifying Christ’s death and by His blood we are redeemed. Too many times that’s as far as our insight goes. We must come to see it in a broader aspect. In reality it’s only the cross that remolds, remakes, and produces within us the attitude that we’ve been studying

about in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. If I have trouble with those attitudes, my problem is I never have fully seen the cross!

Back in Matthew 4, Satan had tried to tempt Christ and keep Him from fulfilling His mission, and Jesus had repulsed him. Now through the instrument of one of His friends, he comes to Him. Peter was well meaning. He said, "We're not going to let that happen." Jesus said, "You're allowing Satan to use you." Sometimes Satan works through those that are closest to us. They may have good intentions, but we need to be sure that we are not allowing Satan to use somebody that may be close to us to keep us from doing what we need to do and what we must do. He said, "*Thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men*" (Matt. 16:23). Here's the contrast between the thinking of men and the thinking of God. That's what the whole scheme of redemption is about. That's the reason that it's difficult for us to accept the full meaning of the cross because we want to think about it from the standpoint of human wisdom, rather than that of divine revelation. It's only as we look at it as God has revealed it to us that we'll come to understand what it's all about.

The cross is an end to self will (Matt. 16:24). That's exactly what the attitudes of the beatitudes are all about. Self denial is a difficult thing for us to come to appreciate. We fail to realize the price that we pay out of our own self will and the refusal of self denial. "*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it*" (Matt. 16:25) – if you become self centered, you're going to lose what you hope to have. "*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*" (Matt. 16:26). There is the heart of what it's all about. Self denial means the end of self will, and the end of self will means care and concern for other people. When we think that it costs too much to deny ourselves and we live self centered lives remember the cost that we have to pay in the extra stresses of life that are ours. Christianity is the end of my own will and my own way, and I live to say each day, "Thy will be done, not mine." When His will is done, other people become my care and my concern. With my care and concern for them, the stresses and the strains that come from thinking about self are relieved. Christianity is designed, not only to save our souls, but to provide for us the health that we need and the attitudes for living.

We need to keep in mind that these statements are made in view of the fact that Christ had announced earlier that He was going to the cross. We have to make some decisions about what life's all about. When we fail to make that decision about what life involves and leave out the cross, we're

cheating ourselves out of the real purposeful meaning of life. We should remind ourselves that the choices we make are eternal. A congregation should consider the fact that it may gain the world and lose its spirituality. I'm afraid that in some instances today that's what happened. We've become interested in getting along with the world and growing in numbers and laid aside spirituality. That's a tremendous sacrifice to make.

Jesus saw glory beyond the cross (Matt. 16:27). The cross stood between Christ and that glory, and it stands between every one of us and that glory. We've got to make some decisions about the cross and the implications of it in our own lives. If we fail to do that, then of course we are going to miss it.

"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16:28). The kingdom announced by John with the character described in Matthew 5, 6, and 7 is going to come into being but the cross is what is going to make that kingdom possible. It's the cross that creates these attitudes in our lives. We're not going to be able to develop those attitudes until we come to study the cross and the things that are included in it. Some of them to whom Christ was talking would be able to see that kingdom come into existence.

Read the Text

1. "A _____ and adulterous generation seeketh after a _____; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet _____. And he _____ them, and departed."
2. "Do ye not yet _____, neither _____ the five loaves of the _____ thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?"
3. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art _____, and upon this _____ I will build my _____; and the gates of hell shall not _____ against it."
4. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his _____, how that he must go unto _____, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and _____, and be killed, and be raised again the _____ day."
5. "For what is a man _____, if he shall gain the _____ world, and lose his own _____? Or what shall a man give in _____ for his soul?"

Research the Text

1. Why were the Pharisees and Sadducees desiring a sign from heaven?
2. What was the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?
3. What two questions did Jesus have for His disciples in Caesarea Philippi?
4. What were the answers given by the disciples to those two questions?
5. What is required of those who will follow after Christ?

Review the Text

1. What is the sign of the prophet Jonah that was given to the Pharisees and Sadducees?
2. Discuss some of the difficulties and problems we face because we, like the disciples, sometimes fail to remember.
3. What is the meaning and the significance of the word “church”?
4. What is the rock upon which the church is built?
5. Discuss the importance of the cross and its significance to our lives.

The Transfiguration and Greatness

Lesson Text: Matthew 17-18

The Transfiguration of Christ

This is an unusual event in the life of Christ. Generally the emphasis that is given does not tell the whole story and does not get down to some of the things that are really signified in it. Until I studied the book of Luke I did not really appreciate the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36). [We need to] note some of the things that Luke tells us that [are] not in the book of Matthew. Matthew said six days [while Luke says eight days]. This tells you something about the way of counting. There is no contradiction between what Luke says and what Matthew says. It depends on what days are included as to whether it would be six days or eight days. Matthew doesn't say anything about Him going into the mountain to pray [but Luke does]; Luke gives us more accounts of Christ praying than any other of the writers. There are nine different instances in the book of Luke where Luke tells us that Jesus prayed. All of these are at critical times in His life such as when He was going to select the disciples. The fact that Luke tells us that He went up into the mountain to pray reminds us that He has now reached a critical stage in His life. *"And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening"* (Luke 9:29). Matthew used the word "transfigured." The American Standard Version says that it was dazzling. The margin says that it was shining. *"And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elijah: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem"* (Luke 9:30-31). Again this is peculiar to Luke.

Luke gives us an insight into the Transfiguration that you will not find anywhere else. *"And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up,"* (Luke 9:51). That's in view of what's happened in this chapter in connection with the Transfiguration. Luke suggests to us that at the time of the Transfiguration Jesus was ready to be received up. That tells us something that is not found in Matthew, and it tells us something about the Transfiguration. In the account in Matthew 3, when Jesus was baptized, God said this is my beloved Son. That's His way of saying all of His life He has been sinless. There was not a single blot or a mar on His life when He was baptized. The same language is used in reference to the Transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son," [which is] another way of

declaring that He has lived that sinless life. What was to keep Him from being received back up to glory? There wasn't anything to hinder; He was ready to go. What was it then that kept Him from going? That's found in Luke 9:31 [where] Moses and Elijah were talking to Him about [His decease]. Suppose that He had been received up at that time. Where would that have left me? Since I can't live that kind of life then it would have been hopeless for me. What about Moses, Elijah, and everybody that had left prior to that from the time of Adam on down? They would have been hopeless. It's not any wonder when Moses and Elijah appeared with Him on the Mount that they talked with Him about His decease which should be accomplished at Jerusalem because the Law recognized the cross as being central to man's needs. Moses represented that. Moses having given the Law and having sinned himself and unable to enter into the land of Canaan, what man would recognize more the need of the cross than Moses himself? Elijah represents the prophets. Christ and the cross is the heart of all the prophets. Though they have been in that unseen world that's not what their conversation is about. They talked about His decease, [or] His exodus; that's the word literally. They were talking about His cross. That's what they were interested in for they knew the hope of all that had lived from Adam, under the Law and through the prophets, depended upon what should be accomplished. Should Christ at this time having lived a sinless life and thereby fitted for heaven itself been received back to heaven the world would have been forever lost. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, and therefore man would have been hopeless. If [these] two men, one being buried by the hand of God and the other going to heaven in a chariot, when they came with Christ on the mount of Transfiguration [had] their minds centered on the cross that ought to tell us that there is not anything more important in our lives than the cross of Christ. That's what our minds and our hearts ought to be centered on, because that is our only hope. To miss the meaning of that cross, its relationship to my life, and its effect in my life is to be lost forever. God intended for that cross not only to change our relationship to Him but to change our way of life. If we're not letting the cross do that, we are missing the meaning of it.

Moses had led an exodus out of Egypt. The prophets had worked with the people of that exodus, but the exodus that Moses led had not prepared men to leave this world for the world above. Thus Jesus came into the world and has now lived that sinless life, but that's not enough to complete that exodus that Moses started and that the prophets had talked about. The cross is necessary. Jesus came into the world [and] died on the cross to complete an exodus that they had started in the Old Testament and to

prepare people in heart and in life to leave this world and to go be with God.

When it says His raiment was white and gleaming, it literally means it was an inward light. Remember when Moses went up on the mountain (Exo. 34:29). He came down from the mountain and his face shined (2 Cor. 3:7, 13), but that didn't last. The light of Moses was a reflected light. The light that shined on the Mount of Transfiguration was not a reflected light. It was a light that came out of His very inward being tied to His deity and His perfect humanity.

[Moses and Elijah] talked with Him about what He would accomplish. The word "accomplish" means to fulfill. That was Luke's way of saying that the cross fulfilled all that there was in the Old Testament with Moses and Elijah representing everything back there. As you see this heavenly conversation about the cross, we learn that the cross was the center of heaven's conversation, but it also the center of our hope. [Christ] had reached one stage of why He came into the world, and then He begins the second one. He steadfastly set His face toward Jerusalem so that He could accomplish the second part of what He came into the world [to accomplish].

Peter said, "Let us build three tabernacles – one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." Very often we come to a place in life where we want to peg our progress. Peter felt that they had reached the heights. We can develop that same philosophy of life. It's a danger that we all face, because we like to come to the place where we can let up and slack up. When we do, then we lose sight of what life is all about. We never reach the place in this life where we have it made. When we peg our progress and say, "I'm just going to sit down here," we close our eyes to the needs and opportunities that we have around us. Here is a father and son down in the valley that needed some help. [They] would have not received that help had they stayed on top of the mountain.

Healing the Lunatic Son

We have learned in connection with the apostles going out in the limited commission they were granted certain miraculous powers. Here is a case of where they had failed. The operation of miraculous powers did not work apart from the faith of the one that had that power. We realize the days of miracles have passed since they have fulfilled their purpose. Revelation confirmation has been completed, and therefore we should not expect that today. Here they had failed. They realized they had failed. The man came to Christ and said, "Your disciples have failed. They had been performing miracles, and I brought one to them and they failed." The lesson

teaches us how to deal with our failures. They didn't just throw up their hands and say so what; they went to the Lord and said, "We failed. Tell us why we failed." They wanted to learn something from their failure. They went to the right place to ask the question. When we have failed in our plans, why not say, "Why did we fail?" Let Christ through [the Bible] solve our problems. If we're willing to open the Bible and analyze what we have done, we can always find the source of our failure. Here is an example of Christ coming down from the mountain showing that He was needed down in the valley. There was work yet for Him to do. If He had stayed on the mountain, then the solution to this problem would not have been found, neither would the solution to our problem.

Betrayed

"And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men" (Matt. 17:22). Back in chapter 16 Jesus had said He must go to Jerusalem, He would be killed by the Scribes and Pharisees, and He would be raised the third day. Here you have the word "betrayed." What we are studying now has to do primarily with His disciples. Not only will there be those like the Scribes and Pharisees that have opposed Him and continue to oppose Him that will have a part in His crucifixion, [but] there will also be some on the inside. We know that is Judas.

Paying Tribute

Those who collected the temple tax said, "Doesn't your master pay tax?" Peter said, "Yes." Watch the conversation with Christ and Peter. The conversation that takes place with Christ and Peter on this occasion goes back to what Peter had already said (Matt. 16:14-16). *"And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free" (Matt. 17:25-26).* You can't appreciate that unless you keep in mind what Peter said in Matthew 16. On that basis, Christ was free. When they came and asked Peter the question, they didn't ask Peter [if he was] going to pay tribute money. They said, "Doth your master?" That was a criticism of Christ. That statement that children are free goes back then to Matthew 16. *"Notwithstanding, (Jesus knew He was free,) lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth,*

thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee" (Matt. 17:27). In order that [He] might not offend, [Peter was to] go and cast a hook. This is the only time that this method of fishing is mentioned anywhere in the New Testament. They didn't need a number of fish, just one. Jesus, because of His humanity as well as His Deity, enters into fellowship with the disciples. Here Christ was totally free from a responsibility, but Jesus said I am going to do it because I don't want to offend anybody. Is that not a lesson that we can learn in connection with this? How important it is for us to feel that we ought to try to avoid offending people! We should give careful attention so that we do not do things which are offensive.

Who Is Great?

We have now come to the principles that Jesus is going to teach His disciples that develop out of Matthew 5, 6, and 7. This section goes from chapter 18 through chapter 20 and verse 28. Matthew 18:1 and 20:27 show that this is an entire section where Jesus deals either directly or indirectly in answer to the question, "who is the greatest?" Jesus had announced the cross twice up unto this time. They had missed the meaning of the cross in spite of all that He had said, and therefore they are raising this question [about] who is the greatest? Mark and Luke also discuss this (Mark 9; Luke 9).

Mark tells us that when they asked the question, they had been in an argument over that thing. This whole controversy created problems. The events are given in Mark 9. After Jesus had said what He did and brought the little child, that caused John to do a little heart searching. John said there was a fellow that was not one of us and I told him to stop what he was doing. Christ was not saying what He did to John to suggest that here is a person that belongs to a different religious order or some other denomination. This whole question has nothing to do with the matter of doctrinal soundness; it has to do with an attitude of pride and rejecting people because they are little ones, insignificant as far as the world is concerned.

We are dealing with something that is basic. *"Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 18:3). The kingdom would begin at Pentecost, and He said if you want to enter into the kingdom here is what has to take place. The failure to learn and to apply what is in Matthew 5, 6, and 7 allowed the dispute to develop. We all like recognition. Satan knows

that, and therefore takes advantage of that situation and uses me because of that to bring about disputes and disruptions as is set forth here. There is only one solution to this whole problem. Unless I learn this lesson and allow the cross of Christ to change my outlook so that what I am looking for in life is not recognition but in order that I might glorify God I am going to be lost. The difficulty in dealing with this is seen in the statement that Jesus made, "Except ye be converted."

We must learn that we've got to lay aside the standard by which the world measures things. The way the world measures things is by pride. The things that contribute to our being recognized and noticed are the standard of the world. The cross of Christ is the only thing that will change that.

Conversion involves a fundamental change. For example if you take water and convert it into ice you can see the drastic change that has taken place. This indicates how conversion is to bring about a drastic change in the way that we think. That's what Christ is illustrating. In verse 4, He says, whosoever. This opens the door for everyone to be great. It has nothing to do with social standing, economic standing, or cultural standing. The word "whosoever" is an inclusive word; it takes in everybody. Therefore, I have it within my grasp based upon the principles Jesus set forth to become great. That is one of the reasons I need to think about it – it's open to me.

Greatness is found in the kingdom of God. It doesn't matter how much you may obtain in this world; there is no greatness to anything you do unless it is in or in connection with the kingdom of God. Greatness is found in humility not in pride. If I ever expect to be great, here is the place that I must begin. Apart from humility, pride will cause me to overlook people that I don't need to overlook. Pride will cause me to have an attitude toward people that is wrong. People that are insignificant, as the world measures them, I tend to look at them sort of over my nose. These little ones that He is talking about as measured by the world are little, insignificant, overlooked people, and we just turn them off. It may be that they have no place in the world; it may be that they are despised by the world, but I can't look at them that way. The only way I'll ever be able to do that is humility.

Humility is not something that we can just say I believe I am going to be humble. In order to become humble, I must be small in my own eyes. Jesus talked about little people here. When I talk about little in our own eyes, I am using it in the proper sense not in the sense that we go around and say there is nothing I can do. I am thinking about it as we see ourselves in relation to others. How do we think about our standing in society? Do I look at myself in relation to other Christians and feel that I am less than the

least or do I feel that I am just a step higher? Humility begins by seeing myself in the proper light.

In order that I might be humble before God as the Bible teaches, I [need to] look at my life in relationship to the greatness of God. Can you imagine someone coming into the presence of God feeling like he is really somebody? How often do we think about the greatness of God? Let me ponder the greatness of God and that will help me see as the psalmist said, *“What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him?”* (Psalm 8:4). Read the book of Psalms and notice the humility of the ones you read of in [that] book. They mark the majesty and the greatness of God; you won’t read a psalm where there is an expression that acknowledges their littleness but what in the same context you will hear them talking about the greatness of God. If I think about the greatness of God, it will create within me the spirit and attitude of humility.

Let me think about the holiness of God and that also will create the spirit of humility. When I realize that God is holy, [that] He says for me to be holy, and then I look at my own life and see my shortcomings, [I’ll] realize that the only way that I can ever be holy before God is through the means that He has provided for me in the scheme of redemption. When I think about [what] God provided that I might be holy and thereby in fellowship with Him, that indeed will help to create within me the spirit of humility.

Another thing that will help to create a spirit of humility is to see my life in relationship to the need of other people. Philippians 2 points out the need of concern for others and what happens when that takes place. Paul said [that he was] a debtor to all men (Rom. 1:14). He said, “I am in debt to the Jew and the Gentile, to the Greek and the Barbarian.” No wonder Paul was a humble man after he became a Christian [because] as he looked at his responsibilities [he] saw his own life and his limitations. That’s enough to bring about humility – to say that there is not anybody anywhere that I am not in debt to and then think about the difficulty that I have in meeting that responsibility.

[Another thing] that will help me grow in humility and develop a spirit of humility is to see the breadth and depth of the Bible and realize how little I know about it. We haven’t touched the hem of the garment as far as learning what is in the Bible. When I pick up this book, think about the contents of it, and then measure what I know about it, it will create within me the spirit of humility because I know so little and there is so much that I need to know.

Then again another thing that will help to create humility on my part is to recognize my own frailties and my own weaknesses. We like to think

about our strengths and not our weaknesses, but when I think about where I am strong and ignore where I am weak it tends to create pride within me. Have you ever tried some task that seems to be just beyond your means and you couldn't do it? It makes you feel little. On the other hand, there is something that you can do. You do a real good job, and [when] you get through you say, "Look what I have done." Whenever I look at my strong points and ignore my weaknesses that creates pride. If I take the time to think about the frailties and weaknesses that will create humility because that will create within me [a] sense of my need of God.

Greatness then begins with humility. We usually think about people being great that are proud, but that's the standard that the world sets. That's not the standard that God sets. Jesus tells us greatness begins in the heart. What's my heart like? Greatness is not measured by the world. *"Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"* (Matt. 18:7). There is no way that the world is going to live without there being offences because of the standards that they have. If we follow their standards, that is what is going to happen to us.

Greatness grows out of a proper attitude toward sin. The man that does not think that sin is a serious matter will never be great. Jesus said, *"Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 18:8-10). The person that tries to laugh sin off or ignore sin in his own life will never be great in the kingdom of God. It is a serious matter. How do I think about my own sins and my own shortcomings? Who is going to be greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Jesus said the man that understands how sin is. All of us [would] do well to remember that, because we live in a world that laughs at sin. We live in a world that mocks sin. Solomon said fools make a mockery of sin.

Greatness in God's sight and in the kingdom of God is measured by concern for souls (Matt. 18:11-14). How concerned are we about souls whoever they are? Verse 11 says, *"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost,"* and that means anybody because all are lost. Therefore we should be concerned about the salvation of big and little whoever they may be. Look at the effort. [It's] not an easy job to go into

the mountains, in the bushes, and [in] the briars hunting that one that is lost. There is greatness – concern for souls. The person that is not concerned about a world that is lost does not measure up to the standard of greatness as given by God.

Read the Text

1. “Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, _____, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three _____; one for thee, and one for _____, and one for _____.”
2. “Lord, have _____ on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore _____: for oftentimes he falleth into the _____, and oft into the _____.”
3. “Then came the _____ to Jesus apart, and said, _____ could not we _____ him out?”
4. “Peter saith unto him, Of _____. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the _____ free.”
5. “At the same time came the _____ unto Jesus, saying, Who is the _____ in the kingdom of _____?”

Research the Text

1. What is meant by the phrase, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”?
2. What does Moses represent on the Mount of Transfiguration?
3. What does Elijah represent on the Mount of Transfiguration?
4. Why couldn’t the disciples cast out the demon?
5. What did Jesus as an illustration of greatness?

Review the Text

1. What are some of the differences between Matthew’s and Luke’s account of the Transfiguration?
2. Discuss the significance of what Moses, Elijah, and Christ discussed.
3. What is the best way to deal with our failures?
4. Why did Jesus pay tribute? What lesson can we learn from this?
5. Compare what the world says about greatness to what Christ describes as great.

Lesson 7

Greatness and Forgiveness

Lesson Text: Matthew 18

Guardian Angels?

“Take heed that ye despise one of these little ones for I say unto you that in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10). This passage sometimes is used in an attempt to justify what [are] called God’s guardian angels. It’s important to look at the context of the passage to see what is under consideration. Sometimes people get the idea that these little ones are children, and that grows out of the failure to look at what’s under consideration. It’s true that He called a child unto Him and set him in the midst of [them]. He said, *“Except ye be converted, and become as little children”* (Matt. 18:3). Then He said, *“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child the same is the greatest in the kingdom”* (Matt. 18:4). Look at verse 6, *“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me.”* He moved from taking the child as an illustration to talking about one that was insignificant, overlooked, [and] despised that was a believer. He moved from the illustration to talking about a believer that is a little one in the eyes of the world. Keep in mind [that] Matthew is written to the Jews. The Jews, especially the Scribes and the Pharisees, despised other people; they looked down upon the Gentiles. The fact that it said, *“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones,”* shows He’s talking about an insignificant believer.

He says, *“That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father.”* The angels then are standing in God’s presence. The angels haven’t sinned. They are there beholding God’s presence, beholding God’s face. *“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost”* (Matt. 18:11). He’s saying that God is interested in the redemption of man. *“How think ye that if a man have a hundred sheep and one them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine and go into the mountains and seek that which has gone astray? And if it so be that he find it verily I say unto you that he rejoices more for that sheep than for the ninety and nine which went not astray. For even so it is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish”* (Matt. 18:12-14). Do you not see that this verse is placed in the context of God being interested in the redemption of all regardless of what their situation may be in life? It’s a mistake to think [that] the little ones, the insignificant, or anyone [is]

overlooked in God's sight. Listen to what [Gabriel] said to Zacharias, *"The angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stands in the presence of God and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings"* (Luke 1:19). That's about redemption. That's the glad tidings of salvation. What was the mission of the angel? It was an announcement unto Zacharias concerning the work of John the Baptist and in view of that the work of Christ.

Matthew's account of the lost sheep is the same thing that we have in the book of Luke, except Luke gives us an expanded account. *"Then grew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him"* (Luke 15:1). Here are some of these little ones that Matthew 18 is talking about. *"And the Pharisees and the Scribes murmured saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them"* (Luke 15:2). They despised these little ones (Matthew 18:10). They didn't think they had any right to God's blessings, and they criticized Christ for being interested in trying to save them and having anything to do with them. *"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance"* (Luke 15:4-7). Here are people that have turned from sin and through God's grace have been brought into a relationship with Him, and there is joy in heaven. Thus God's face is made to shine upon them. Their relationship with God is now made right. If I was going to let the Bible explain to me what Matthew 18:10 meant, these passages would give me at least some insight into what He was talking about. There is no reference to the general idea that people have guardian angels. Indeed if that was true, how could anything happen to anybody? Did the angel fail? You [have] all kinds of problems when you place that kind of interpretation on the passage. The passage is talking about redemption. What's one of the problems? Because of pride, people tend to despise other people and to deny people the right of redemption. God's face is directed towards, rejoices, and shines upon anyone that is obedient to the truth and that receives grace in keeping with what He has revealed to us in His Word in order that they might be redeemed from sin. Therefore, they are subject to His blessings. God's blessings are for everybody, and the angels in heaven rejoice when one sinner whether he's big or little, black or white, green or red, rich or poor, ignorant or educated,

it doesn't make any difference [is redeemed].

Who Is Great?

Greatness as explained by Jesus includes the matter of concern for souls (Matt. 18:15). The background of what we are studying is in Leviticus 5. *"And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity"* (Lev. 5:1). When I see someone doing wrong and I know that that's wrong I cannot just let that go because somebody's souls at stake. *"If a soul commit a trespass and sin through ignorance"* (Lev. 5:15). I might without intention sin against somebody; there is such a thing as a sin of ignorance. How can I straighten that up unless you came to me and said we need to get this straightened out? *"If a soul sins and commit of these things that have been forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord though he wished it not he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity"* (Lev. 5:17). [We] have a responsibility toward helping [others] even though [they] may be guilty of something that [they] are not conscious of or that [they] do not know is a sin. [We] don't need to just let it pass by because ignorance doesn't excuse [see also (Lev. 6:2-4; Deut. 19:11-21)].

Somebody has wronged me, [but] what about my responsibility? I am not to be concerned just about the fact that I have been hurt; my chief concern is that sin has been committed and a soul is at stake. Because a soul is at stake, then I am concerned about that and want to see that corrected. This places a responsibility on the one that's wronged. *"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"* (Matt. 18:15). [Gain] is a commercial term used in connection with a man accumulating wealth. When someone has sinned against me I have a lost something because of his sin. That sin has affected his relationship with God; not only is the man lost as far as his soul is concerned, but I have lost something. If I see my brother doing [what] is wrong then I ought to be concerned about it because a loss is involved. I ought to be interested in trying to help him correct that wrong that his soul might be saved. If you read it as the ASV has it in the margin and some manuscripts say then it wouldn't matter if he wronged me or not. If I see a brother doing wrong then I ought to be interested in helping him make whatever correction may be necessary whether it is directly against me or not. But if you take it as it is in the KJV if he's wronged me, then I need to be interested in helping correct that.

Suppose that he won't; Deuteronomy 19 comes into play. *"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"* (Matt. 18:16). I could be wrong about it; I might imagine that somebody might have wronged me. I might have missed the whole situation, or if indeed he has done wrong and my talking to him will not change it, I am still concerned about his soul until I get somebody else [to] go help me [because] a soul is lost. If one can't do it then let two or three try to do it. So it has been established then, but he won't hear me or the two or three others; what then? Then the whole church is involved (Matt. 18:17). Sin is serious (cf. Matt. 18:8-9). It's a matter of life and death. The whole church becomes concerned about one lost sheep. Listen to what Peter said, *"The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, his ears are open to their prayers, but his face is against them that do evil"* (1 Pet. 3:12). Here's one that's done wrong; God's face is against them. The whole church becomes involved. We need to do what we can to try to see that it's corrected and that God's face does not remain turned away from them. Sin is a serious matter, and we should be concerned about trying to do what we can and not just think it's not my responsibility.

If the concern of all the church is unable to bring about the necessary correction, then they are to be counted as a heathen man and a publican. Deuteronomy 19:21 says, *"Thine eye shall not pity."* Whenever wrong is done that is not corrected, it is a mistake to allow pity to keep one from doing what is necessary to try and save a soul. There can be such thing as wrong sympathy. The Bible teaches compassion, but when compassion has done all that it can to try to bring about correction and has not succeeded, then finally there must be the recognition that the last step must be taken as a final means of trying to reach them. Whenever that is done God recognizes that (Matt. 18:18-20). First of all, this is a statement that is made in reference to the apostles in the binding and the loosing on earth. When you have the reality of something that is established at the mouth of two or three witnesses, then whenever that truth is made known whatever is necessary in order to deal with that then God recognizes that in heaven. Of course that's based upon the fact that we are guided by what the New Testament teaches. That's really the meaning of verse 20. I realize that this passage is often quoted to say that where two or three are gathered together to worship that God is in the midst of them. That's true, but the real point in this is that, *"where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"* that goes back to verse 16. Whenever it is established that here is something that has been done that has not been corrected, then to say that God is in the midst of them is

another way of saying that God ratifies that action. He recognizes that showing the serious nature of what is taking place.

Peter's Question

Because of this, Peter then brings a question. *"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?"* (Matt. 18:21). Jesus said if thy brother shall trespass against thee; Peter realizes there are frailties that belong to humanity, but he thinks that there is a limitation that may be placed upon their frailties and the time that we may forgive them. The Jewish rabbis taught that there were certain number of times that one is to be forgiven. When they had been forgiven that many times, you should not expect it anymore. Here is a principle that is taught – forgiveness is not based upon a mathematical equation. It is easy to get religion mixed up with math. We begin to count and measure things in that way, but that is not the way that God does it. He is going to show in the context that we need forgiveness from God. Suppose that God determined my forgiveness based upon a mathematical equation, and He said when you sin so many times, you just run out. [We'd] be in sad shape. I'm glad that God hasn't placed me in that situation, because as long as I live in this world I am going to need God's forgiveness. If I'm going to need God's forgiveness as long as I live, that means that other people are going to need it too. If all of us continue to need God's forgiveness, that means that there are going to be continually shortcoming in our lives. That means that I may trespass against you and you may trespass against me. What are we going to do? [Peter] said, "How many times am I going to do it?" Jesus said that you don't go by count. He said, "Until seventy times seven." That's just another way of saying that it is not a matter of mathematics. Forgiveness is a matter of attitude. It is a matter of heart. We should realize that Jesus is saying there is an attitude that is expressed in forgiveness.

How can I develop the attitude of always being forgiving? Jesus is going to answer that. That's what the rest of this chapter is telling us. *"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"* (Matt. 18:23-24). Ten thousand talents [are] equal to about \$10 million. The margin of my Bible says if it is silver [it is] \$52,800,000. The idea presented is it is an amount that one can never pay (Matt. 18:25). It doesn't matter how much it was; he was bankrupt. He didn't have anything to pay with. We are thinking about

the matter of our relationship to God, and we are right back at, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit"* (Matt. 5:3) – those who are bankrupt who have nothing to pay with, and they know they have nothing to pay with. *"His lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made"* (Matt. 18:25). This is the situation that we would be in if the Lord made that demand on us and said, "Pay up." I wouldn't have anything to pay with. In fact, if the Lord called on me to pay up for just one sin, I wouldn't have anything to pay with.

When he didn't have anything to pay with what's his only hope? *"The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all"* (Matt. 18:26). That's just what he thought. How could he? What could that fellow have done? *"Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt"* (Matt. 18:27). Here is the way that the debt was taken care of. What's the purpose in giving this? It is to show that forgiveness produces an attitude within those that are forgiven. How will I ever be able to develop the attitude of forgiving somebody of their frailties and shortcomings for a lifetime? Here it is right here. This is the only way I will ever do it.

"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" (Matt. 18:28-29). That's the very thing this fellow said. *"And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. 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 desirest me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?"* (Matt. 18:30-33). Here is the crux of this whole thing. How can I, who stands in the need of God's forgiveness every day be unmerciful toward somebody else who needs my mercy and compassion? If I appreciate the mercy that God has extended to me, I can't.

The closing verses of this chapter are really something solemn. It is easy to grow up into the idea that what I do earns me God's blessings. We'll slip into that without realizing it unless we are careful. For example, I may think I give liberally, so what? What's that got to do with forgiveness? Not one thing under the sun. Not a thing. That's not the way forgiveness comes. God nowhere made my forgiveness conditional upon my liberality.

Indeed, the Bible teaches that my liberality grows out of my appreciation for forgiveness. We don't need to get these things reversed. If we get these things reversed, then we've got problems. The liberality of the Macedonians grew out of their appreciation of God's forgiveness of them (2 Cor. 8). Find an unforgiving person, and you have found a person that doesn't understand and appreciate God's forgiveness. The people that Jesus was dealing with had the idea that they had earned God's blessings. Peter had imbibed that spirit. He had the idea if I'll forgive a fellow seven times, then I've earned God's blessing. Jesus said, "Peter you're wrong about that." Then He gives the parable here to illustrate what He is saying. *"Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?"* (Matt. 18:33). What is the measure? The measure of my forgiveness [is] even as God has had pity on me (cf. Eph. 4:32). Here is what happens whenever I fail to allow God's forgiveness to produce within me an attitude of forgiveness. *"And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him"* (Matt. 18:34). Remember we read in Matthew 5, *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."* Should I go to the judgment refusing to extend mercy to a single soul that has asked for it, [then] I won't find any up there.

Verse 33 said, *"Even as I had pity on thee."* [Then verse 35,] *"So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."* Here is the pattern. The Bible gives us the pattern for organization: elders, deacons, members, [and] evangelists. The Bible gives us the pattern for worship, the pattern for evangelization, the pattern for benevolence, the pattern for becoming a Christian, and the pattern of baptism. [However,] here is a pattern that is far more difficult to comply with than any of the [other] patterns. It's not difficult to have a congregation that has elders, deacons, evangelists, and members. It's not difficult to have the pattern of worship, but when [we] come to this pattern it's a different thing. How many does this pattern take in? It doesn't leave anybody out.

Read the Text

1. "Take heed that ye _____ not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their _____ do always behold the face of my Father which is in _____."
2. "Moreover if thy _____ shall trespass against thee, _____ and tell him his fault between thee and him _____: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy _____."

3. "Then came _____ to him, and said, Lord how oft shall my brother _____ against me, and I _____ him? Till seven times?"

4. "Then the lord of that _____ was moved with _____ and loosed him, and _____ him the debt."

5. "Shouldest not thou also have had _____ on thy fellow servant, even as I had _____ on thee?"

Research the Text

1. According to the context of Matthew 18:10, who are the "little ones" under consideration?
2. What does greatness include?
3. Give the pattern for correcting a problem when someone sins against you.
4. What happens if our brother hears us?
5. What question did Peter ask the Lord about forgiveness?

Review the Text

1. Do we have guardian angels watching over and protecting us? Why or why not?
2. Explain why we should be concerned about our brother who has sinned against us.
3. Explain Matthew 18:20 in view of the context in which it is found.
4. What is to result from God's forgiveness which we receive?
5. Why is the pattern of forgiveness a difficult pattern to follow?

Lesson 8

Marriage and Material Things

Lesson Text: Matthew 19

Introduction

Look at the chapter divisions [between 18 and 19] and then skip them. *“And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan”* (Matt. 19:1). Jesus bids farewell to Galilee. A great part of His ministry was spent in the Galilean ministry. He is going to begin His journey back to Jerusalem. Multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there. Then the Pharisees came to Him, and they have the marriage question. Here is the reason that we ought to ignore chapter divisions. Each of the writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John collected their material and arranged it in order to emphasize certain things. The events that they put together may not have fallen in this same way chronologically. They are put there to give certain emphasis. Look at the question that they asked (Matt. 19:3). Can you not sense that there is a direct relationship between the question of marriage and what we have been talking about? How fundamental are the things we have been talking about to a good marriage relationship? Everything that we have been talking about in chapter 18 is basic to a good marriage relationship. What is greatness? A person that quibbles about the Bible will never be great in the kingdom of God. These people came to Christ, and they were quibblers. They were not interested in truth but interested in trying to trap Him. There were two groups of people that were divided over the marriage question. One group said for anything they could divorce, and the other group said only for adultery. As we study Matthew 19, Christ will help us find out where and how to find some answers to this question. The principles of Matthew 18 would have avoided what happened in the period of Moses. They wouldn’t have had that problem if the principles of Matthew 18 had been followed.

The Question

The multitudes were following Him, and He healed them (Matt. 19:2). Here [is] a continued picture of Christ’s concern about the needs of others. It is against that background that the Pharisees come to Him tempting Him and asking Him the question, “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for

every cause?" There were those that said any cause is sufficient. They were saying incompatibility is justification for divorce. That [is] what Jesus is going to deal with, but in doing so He lays down some principles that we need to keep in mind if we are going to understand what He is talking about. Our happiness in this world begins with the proper kind of marriage. For marriage to succeed and be what God intended for it to be and what man needs for it to be, there are certain principles that must go with it.

Jesus answered them and said, *"Have ye not read that He, which, made them at the beginning, made them male and female? And said for this cause shall man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder"* (Matt. 19:4-6). When God made Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden, they were placed in the position of ultimate happiness. Everything that man could want and desire that was good for him was provided there. In the first chapter of the book of Genesis, when God had finished the creation, He looked at what he had done and said that it is good. There was not anything that was lacking. Jesus goes back to the ultimate foundation, the very beginning; man needed companionship. Both men and women were created so that each has the need of the other. The fact that we have the need of one another must be underlined and undergirded by some fundamental principles. Without that, our need of one another will turn into the very thing that's detrimental. Our need of one another can turn into a sense of selfishness. My need can become the consuming thinking of my life, and out of that grows the spirit of selfishness. Out of selfishness grows tragedy, heartache, failure, and that's what destroys marriages. That's the reason that Jesus said you need to forget about what the religious teachers are saying. Go back behind Moses, and go back to the very beginning [to] see what God intended when He made man and woman and when [He] ordained marriage. God intended for marriage to supersede every other human relationship. The only relationship that is above that of marriage is man's relationship to God. The ties of marriage are to supersede even the ties of parents. The marriage relationship must be the predominate thing in the life of each one. There's not anything that can take the place in the heart of the husband for his wife or in the heart of the wife for her husband. If in the heart of a wife or a husband there is something takes the place of the other that marriage will never be what it needs to be. It is so significant, so important, and so fundamental that Jesus said once it's entered into nothing ought to interfere with it. Why should it? If God created man, placed him in the Garden of Eden, and for his satisfaction,

enjoyment, and happiness ordained marriage, why should there be anything that should interfere with it? That's the reason that He said for this cause man is to leave everything, and the wife is to leave everything. That being done, God joins that together. "Let not man put asunder" means that I need to understand what I am entering into, and I need to understand my commitment to that. I need to understand the things that enable me to make my marriage work. In spite of the problems that this created in the minds of some at that time, Jesus did not accept their thinking about the difficulties.

The Heart

"They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He said unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your heart" (Matt. 19:7-8). Here is where a marriage is made or broken. "Heart" [is] the word that covers it (cf. Matt. 18:35). Here is where it puts us back in the Sermon on the Mount because that is what the beatitudes are all about. There will never be an unsuccessful marriage that's built upon the attitudes of the beatitudes, and there will never be a successful marriage without it. That is what enables people to live together in all relationships of life, and the marriage relationship is the most intimate and closest relationship in life.

What is the first basic destructive factor in marriage? The answer is pride. That's what Jesus is dealing with in Matthew 18. He took that little child and said you need to become humble like a little child. Pride is a real problem for all of us in all areas of life. It's in discussing the matter of pride that He comes down to Matthew 18:15 talking about correcting a problem and solving problems, and pride is the real crux of our problem to solve problems. You might want to read verse 15 this way, "Moreover if thy wife or husband shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy husband or wife." How many difficulties could be solved overnight with that simple solution? My concern about my wife ought to be her salvation; her concern about me ought to be my salvation. Our concern with a wife's or husband's weaknesses [should] not be one of merely fussing or nagging but one of trying to help solve that problem. So many times because our frailties aggravate the other our tendency is for the one that is aggravated to say I am just tired of putting up with that. The question is, "Why not help me do better?" That's what Christianity is all about.

How many times you going to do that? Peter said when you

straighten it out with her seven times turn around and tell her she can hit the road. Jesus said that is not the way to go about it. You are trying to help somebody go to heaven. He said spend a lifetime submitting yourself to helping whenever and however you need to help them. In order for that to be true, it involves your spouse's forgiveness. If I have a problem with forgiveness, then I need to remind myself how many times God forgives me. His mercy creates within me an attitude of mercy and of pity thereby I am interested in doing all that I can to help. Jesus said the real problem in marriage relationships has to do with the heart, and until the heart is corrected marriage problems are not going to be solved. So Moses suffered it, [but]why? Not because that's what God intended, but because that is what sin had done to the heart.

In view of that, no wonder Jesus said, *"Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery"* (Matt. 19:9). That does not need any explanation; Jesus didn't take time to explain it. He just stated that. That's the way it stands, and that's where it should be left. In view of what Jesus said, *"His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry"* (Matt. 19:10). They said if that's the case then the best thing the man could do is not to marry. Watch what Jesus has to say, *"All men cannot receive this saying save they to whom it is given"* (Matt. 19:11). That is in reference to not marrying. We have already seen that God created man and woman and thereby need for one another. So when the disciples said the best thing then for man is not to marry, Jesus said uh uh. There may be isolated cases where celibacy may be alright, but the majority of the people are not able to receive that. That's a denial of the claim that some make of celibacy. Jesus said that's not the best. There may be exceptions and occasions, but that's not the general rule. He realized the problems that would come out of that, and He describes some different ones that would be the exception that might live the celibate life. Keep in mind that He said this is not for everybody.

"Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciple rebuked them" (Matt. 19:13). If you ignore the chapter divisions, it is an interesting thing beginning in chapter 18 we are introduced to children. At the conclusion of this discussion with the Pharisees having answered them and the problem being brought up by his disciples we are introduced to children again. Why introduce children? Greatness in the home [and] the marriage relationship affects not just the husband and wife it affects children. This is placed here

in this context showing the importance of marriage, not only as far as the people that are involved, the husband and the wife, but also children. Here were parents that were interested in their children. They were bringing them to Christ wanting Him to bless them. That's what marriage is intended to do; it's intended to build into the children the principles that enable them to get the most out of life and learn what the values of life are. Jesus said, *"Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 19:14). Have you ever known of a little child being responsible for the breakup of a home? No! There [are] attitudes in that child that ought to apply to people in life. That's the kind of attitude that helps people get into the kingdom of God. [Those are] the attitudes that ought to characterize people that are older, but look [at] what's going to take place.

What Lack I Yet?

This event (Matt. 19:16-22) is important in relationship to the home, to marriage, and to children. He said, "What may I do?" We need to keep in mind the relationship between grace and doing; grace does not exclude certain kinds of doing. Grace excludes that which is merit. His idea is, "What can I do to merit eternal life?" Jesus, in anticipation of Pentecost, answers his question. It does not involve one thing, [but] it involves an attitude of life, an attitude of heart. Eternal life cannot be had or enjoyed apart from that attitude of heart. Jesus is going to show in connection with this man [that] greatness is found in giving and not in getting. We are still thinking about the same theme of greatness; what makes one great? Giving. What makes life great? Giving. What makes life happy? Giving. What destroys happiness? Getting. What destroys homes? Getting. What makes homes? Giving. That's the foundation of it.

Look at the commandments, and "He saith unto him which?" Here again is the problem. He's trying to get Him down in a corner and not look at a whole life. He's trying to put it over here in a category and out here the rest of it remains his own not affected and influenced by it. Jesus is going to get him out of that situation. He said, "You just tell me which one of these, and I will be glad to select one of them." Jesus quoted the sixth commandment, the seventh commandment, the eighth commandment, the ninth commandment, and the fifth commandment. Then He quoted Leviticus 19:18, *"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."* It took me a long time to realize why Jesus quoted these as He did. Why would a man want to kill somebody? What causes people to get involved in adultery? Why would

a man want to take something that belonged to somebody else? Why should I want to misrepresent somebody and hurt somebody? Why would one not want to [honor their father and mother]? Why would I not want to love my neighbor? *"The young man saith unto him, all these have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?"* (Matt. 19:20). He said, "I have been doing what these say, but there's something lacking. Jesus said, *"If thou be perfect go and sell that thou has and give it to the poor. That thou shall have treasure in heaven and come and follow me"* (Matt. 19:21). Jesus did not quote the tenth commandment which says, *"Thou shalt not covet."* He was leading the man, and when the man said, *"All of these I have kept from my youth up,"* he really hadn't examined his life. It had gone deeper than he had thought about. In Romans 7:7 Paul said, *"I would not have known lust except the law said thou shall not covet."* What is the essence of covetousness? Selfishness. Jesus said, "The thing that is lacking in your life is you're receiving, and you are not giving." There is going to be a void in there until that's changed. Until you get off of that center and come to have another center in your life, you're going to have a missing ingredient. Material things are not going to provide that. It's when you become concerned about other people and when you are interested in giving, helping, showing care and concern for other people that life takes on meaning.

When these principles are applied in a home think about what that will do to a marriage. [The husband] comes home, having faced the problems and difficulties of the day in the world that's cruel, to understanding. What'll that do? It changes life. What about the husband [who is understanding] of his wife's being at home struggling with children? That changes life. That's Christianity; that's not just something that takes place here in the assembly. That's what helps life become meaningful. That's what Jesus was trying to tell him. He said, "If you want life to be full and if you want to get rid of that lack that you have, then find what it means to give and to care." You need to learn how to give (cf. Acts 20:35). [He wanted to know what] religious thing [he could do], [still] hold on to [his] possessions, and fill up what [was] lacking. Jesus said there is no way to do that. It'll only come whenever you learn to put others first. What is it that's lacking in your life, and what is it that's lacking in your marriage? The one thing that'll cure it is [to] let our life become giving. See how much you can give to the other, and that marriage will change.

Who Can Be Saved?

The real problem that the young man had was that the material things of life had so taken control of his life that he wouldn't give them up even to save his soul. When Jesus tested his attitude toward material things, he could not bring himself to do that. Jesus makes some statements that we need to think about. *"Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 19:23). That does not say that a rich man cannot enter the kingdom of God. The problem with the rich man has to do with material things. *"And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?"* (Matt. 19:24-25). Their thinking was if a rich man has that much trouble going to heaven, how can anybody be saved? Their idea was that material blessings was an indication of God's blessings upon a man. If a man had been blessed that way and he couldn't be saved, then how could anybody be saved? *"But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible"* (Matt. 19:26). We need to note carefully the preposition that's in that verse – *with*. He didn't say *to* men this is impossible, but *with* men this is impossible and *with* God all things are possible. That passage has very often been misapplied by some that claim miracles are performed today. That's taken out of its context. The question is, "Who can be saved?" The problem in relationship to salvation has to do with material things, and therefore, on the level of men *with* men salvation is impossible. It doesn't matter how many material things a man may have, that's not going to save him. The rich young ruler is an example. Look at all the material things he had. Mark tells us, giving this same account, that they that *trust* in their riches cannot enter the kingdom of God. The man that relies upon material things for salvation will never be saved. It doesn't matter how many men may be involved and how much we may have of material things, that's not going to save us.

How am I going to have the proper attitude toward the material things of life? The answer: Only God's help makes that possible! Only as I allow God to direct my life and help me understand what life is all about will I ever be able to do that. I don't think we realize the tremendous problem that we have with the things of this life. They are the things that stand in our way. They pamper our pride. They keep us from giving the proper devotion to God. Without God's help, I'll never be able to handle them. Matthew 5:3 says only when man realizes his bankrupt condition will he be able to enter

into the kingdom of God. The material possessions of life tend to stand in our way of feeling our spiritual bankruptcy because as we have these things we tend to rely upon them. We think they give us a source of security. There's the real problem. When I realize that my inward condition, being in sin and standing before God as one of spiritual bankruptcy, therefore I am totally dependent upon God, I have made the first step of being able to deal with the material things of life. Then I understand that with men this is impossible, but with God, what is impossible to man becomes possible. The book of Matthew is God's direction and the offer of God's help to enable me to be able to handle all the material things of life, get my values straightened out, realize what life is all about, and in so doing God will make my salvation possible. The entire scheme of redemption designed by God and made possible through Christ is God's method of answering all the problems of our life and dealing with the things that separate us from Him, and the things that keep us from having peace of mind and heart.

"Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" (Matt. 19:27). The rich young ruler had failed to do what Jesus said. Peter said, "We've already done that. We're not like that rich young ruler; what are we going to have?" Look at the reply that Christ gave (Matt. 19:28-30). The word "verily" is a word that Jesus used to indicate truly. When He uses that word, it's just like putting up a red light. Thayer [denies regeneration as], "new birth, reproduction, renewal, re-creation, hence moral renovation, regeneration, the production of a new life consecrated to God, a radical change of mind for the better effected in baptism (Titus 3:5). Commonly the word denotes the restoration of a change to pristine state, its renovation, as the renewal in the restoration of life from death." I want to underscore two things that he said: "the production of a new life consecrated to God," and "a radical change of mind for the better that is effected in baptism." That's exactly what we've been studying ever since we began Matthew 5. Everything that we've studied that Christ has set forth growing out of the Sermon on the Mount are attitudes of a radical change of mind for the better that is to be effected in baptism. Unless that happens, we've missed the meaning of regeneration.

He said, *"Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* (Matt. 19:28). Look at the radical change of mind that took place in the apostles following Christ's resurrection from the dead and the ascension back to the right hand of God. In Matthew 20, we're going to find them arguing about

which one will be the greatest, but look at the first chapter of the book of Acts following the ascension of Christ [where] you find them in prayer and they were of one accord. [On] the day of Pentecost, they were all of one accord in one place. What's happened? A radical change of mind for the better has resulted, and now we find them together. Look at their attitude toward material possessions – they had all things in common. They sold their houses and lands, brought them, and laid them down at the apostle's feet. What's happened? There has been a radical change in their attitude. With men this was impossible. We must have that radical change of attitude toward the material values of life just like they did.

He said, *"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life"* (Matt. 19:29). There are times when these are given up, [but] I don't think that's necessarily what He's saying. What He's saying is when these are placed in their proper place; these are not what we live for. These are what we use that God has given us for His glory. Luke's account tells us that they shall inherit manifold blessings. For every material advantage that I give up in order that I might place God first in my life, there'll be multiplied spiritual blessings to take its place (Luke 18:30; Matt. 6:33). What am I going to get in exchange now for placing the material values in the proper place? The salvation of my soul (cf. Matt. 16:26)!

"But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matt. 19:30). In the eyes of the world and even in the eyes of the disciples at this time, where did [the young ruler] stand? When Jesus watched that man walk away, I'm sure they were just dumbfounded. Here's one that was upright, had these material possessions, and he said I want to know what to do. Jesus said you've got to get these in the proper place, and I've come to help you do that. He couldn't do it. There's a sad warning in that connection. We need to teach our children life is not made up of material things. How much difference it might have made in the life of this young man if somebody along the way had taught him that life was more than material things! When he was facing the choice of exchanging his soul for the things of this world, they had become so entwined around his heart he couldn't let them go. That's tragedy beyond measure.

Read the Text

1. "The Pharisees also came unto him, _____ him, and saying unto him, Is it _____ for a man to put his wife away for every _____?"
2. "Wherefore they are no more _____, but _____ flesh. What therefore _____ hath joined together, let not man put _____."
3. "His disciples say unto him, If the _____ of the man be so with his wife, it is _____ good to _____."
4. "But Jesus said, _____ little children, and forbid them not, to _____ unto me: for of such is the _____ of heaven."
5. "When his _____ heard it, they were exceedingly _____, saying, Who then can be _____?"

Research the Text

1. To what period of time did Jesus refer the Pharisees in answering their question?
2. Where is a marriage made or broken?
3. What is the only scriptural reason for divorce and remarriage?
4. What was lacking the life of the young ruler?
5. According to Jesus many that are first will be what and the last shall be what?

Review the Text

1. Explain the importance of the marriage relationship.
2. What is a major destructive factor in marriage? Why?
3. Explain what Christianity is all about and how that affects the marriage relationship.
4. Is greatness found in giving or in getting? Why?
5. What is meant by the word regeneration?

Lesson 9

Service and Return to Jerusalem

Lesson Text: Matthew 20-21

Parable of the Laborers

In the first part of chapter 20 [we learn] that the blessings of the Lord do not come by merit (Matt. 20:1-15). They come as a result of God's goodness, and that's what this parable teaches. The real thrust of this parable is found in two things. "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" (Matt. 20:6). The answer to that question is found in the fact that these are the little forgotten people. There hasn't been anybody interested in them. Why? We are back over in chapter 18. We are back in the Sermon on the Mount because the principles that are offered to everybody and that God respects have been overlooked. The second thing that is said that emphasizes the principle of this parable is, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thy eye evil, because I am good?" (Matt. 20:15). Here you have attention called to the goodness of God. The blessing that we have been studying about in the book of Matthew is not based on man's goodness and man's merit but upon God's goodness. Out of the goodness of God, He has devised a scheme of redemption. Let us not confuse the conditions by which we enjoy these blessings with ideas of merit. This parable shows how people had a misconception of God's goodness [as] they were thinking about merit.

The point of the parable is those who had worked throughout the day what they had done had not earned the reward. Those who had gone in at the eleventh hour, they were rewarded not on the base of their neglect, but the fact that the blessing was one of grace. The Jews had the idea that what they did earned God's blessing. That's what the Scribes and the Pharisees thought. They thought that they had a monopoly on the blessing of God, and because of their pious attitude and their rituals [they thought] that gave them the right to enjoy the blessings of God above and beyond others. Jesus is showing that is not true. We must not get the idea that what we do will earn us any blessings from God. There are conditions by which we receive them, and that's the point that He makes in the parable. Therefore, He said the last would be paid just like the rest. Why? Because it is a matter of grace, and not a matter of merit. That's the reason the language is used when He said, "*Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?*" (Matt. 20:15). God devised the scheme of redemption; man couldn't.

That's not saying that no conditions are involved. Each of these that were blessed had to go work. That it was not a work of merit is the point. It's a work of faith, and works of faith are never works of merit.

He said, *"Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"* (Matt. 20:15). An evil eye is one that looks with envy. For example, the idea is found when it's said that Saul eyed David. What is he doing when he eyed David? He is envious of him. Jesus is saying to these Jews, "Do you envy the Gentiles and others, the publicans and harlots that have enjoyed the blessings of God? Don't you appreciate the fact that they can enjoy these blessings too?"

Then He says again, *"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen"* (Matt. 20:16). What makes the difference between the many and the few (cf. Matt. 7:13-14)? The call is sent out to everybody. Why is it that there are a few that are chosen? The solution to that problem [is found] in Matthew 5, 6, and 7: because of the attitudes. The principles laid down in the Sermon on the Mount are demanded and are essential.

The Cross

"And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again" (Matt. 20:17-19). Look at the difficulty in understanding the cross and its implications. Look at the difficulty in allowing the cross to have its effect on life. Read every account in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, where Jesus makes mention of the cross and the events in relationship to the disciples that immediately follow that. As you read that you will see how difficult it is for us as well as them to allow the cross to make its proper impression on our lives.

What Wilt Thou?

"Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshiping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And He said unto her, What wilt thou?" (Matt. 20:20-21). This question is asked twice in this chapter, and there's a contrast between the attitudes of the people that asked the question. Here's a good question to ask, "What is it I want?" The reason that is important [is because] we go in the direction of our desires (cf. Gen. 3:6). The Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel of Christ has as its

intentions to remold and remake our desires. It changes our values, the things we want, and the things that we desire. Jesus is going to illustrate that. *"She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom"* (Matt. 20:21). They desired position [and] praise. Because that was their desire, they wanted to get ahead of everybody else. They knew Jesus has said something about a kingdom [and] about thrones, and so the mother of James and John wanted to get ahead of everybody else. That's where their desires were leading them. *"But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask"* (Matt. 20:22). They did not know what they were asking for. They didn't understand the kind of kingdom He came to set up. *"Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am to be baptized with? They say unto Him, We are able. And He saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father"* (Matt. 20:22-23). Places in the kingdom of God are not portioned out based on political thinking or upon the standards by which the world measures things. The heart of the one it is prepared for is found in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. That's the kind of people that will find a place in God's Kingdom.

Then He shows us that all the attitudes that are produced by the Gospel of Christ are not looking for a place of position but a place of service. *"And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren"* (Matt. 20:24). This is what selfish attitudes always produce. It brings about dissension and friction. *"But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great..."* (Matt. 20:25). Underscore the word great; we are right back to chapter 18 where the disciples said "Who is greatest in the kingdom?" Here is world's standard of greatness. They consider it great to be able to exercise dominion over them. Their philosophy of life is that they might be in a position so that they might be served by others. *"...they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant"* (Matt. 20:25-27). [Greatness is found] in service, but what leads people to serve others? [It is] forgetfulness of self, consideration for others, and compassion for others.

[Jesus said] thrones are made for service. That's the opposite of everything this world believes. Can you imagine a throne being built for a servant [or] a slave? Jesus said the thrones in the kingdom of God are made

for servants. He's not looking for a throne; He's interested in service. But because He's not looking for a throne and He's interested in service, therefore that is the way to a throne. Who would have ever dreamed that the cross would be the road to a throne? The cross was Christ's way of serving lost humanity. Because that was Christ's way of serving lost humanity that led to His throne. That's exactly the principle by which God operates in His kingdom. It is service that leads to a throne but one's not looking for it (cf. Matt. 25:34-40).

"Even as the son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). The phrase "even as" tells us that Jesus is giving us an example and that He's pointing the way to pleasing God. Can you in any way visualize a king coming into a community somewhere, laying aside his robes, putting on overalls and gloves, getting down into the ditch, and digging ditches? No, that's not the way we think about it. Jesus laid aside the robes of heaven, came down to earth, took upon Him the common cloak of man, got down in the mire and filth of those lost in sin, and dug the ditches to help them get out. That's what life is all about. There are two principles in this verse that ought to be remembered. The word "minister" simply means servant. Then there's the word "give", and that's what He did. I can't give my life as a ransom as He did because there's no sanctifying power in my blood, but the principles there are necessary. My life must be concerned and interested in ministering to others, and it must be a life that gives not gets.

Jesus has pointed out that greatness is found in service, and this chapter closes with Jesus doing just exactly what He is saying (Matt. 20:29-34). Who would take the time to think about two poor fellows like this? Jesus would because that's what He came into the world to do – to minister. Look at the world's standards, *"And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace"* (Matt. 20:31). They cried, "He doesn't have the time to fool with you." Look at the sense of need. They said we need mercy. When any person is conscious of his need of mercy and approaches the Lord in the right spirit, He's always ready to stop and to listen. Look at the question [Jesus asked], *"What will ye that I shall do unto you?"* (Matt. 20:32; cf. Matt. 20:21). [The mother of James and John] said give us the throne. Here it is again; Jesus said to these, "What is it you want?" They didn't say the throne; they were concerned with their needs. *"So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight and they followed Him"* (Matt. 20:34).

Entrance into Jerusalem

Matthew 21:1-7 is the fulfillment of Zechariah chapters 9 -11. In fact what we are going to see in the rest of the book of Matthew is the fulfillment of Zechariah chapters 9-11 and chapters 12-14. Zechariah 9 through 11 [gives] the culmination of the priests and kings tied together in becoming kings. Zechariah 12 through 14 deals with rejecting a nation. What a strange combination, kingship and meekness. Who would ever think about a king being meek? The meek are the ones that are concerned for other people. Here is the illustration of greatness. Christians are kings (Rev. 1). They rule with Christ, and they are to be kings in meekness, combining the same principles that He had in His life. Can you imagine a king riding into a place like Jerusalem on a beast of burdens? Kings rode horses and chariots. The language used here shows His lowliness. Jesus was not embarrassed to ride a lowly beast of burden into the city of the great king. It's hard for us to learn to think like the Bible thinks because of the power and prestige of the world. How many things and principles [does] the Bible set forth that we refuse to abide by because we feel we would be embarrassed? Jesus didn't go into the city of Jerusalem to try to impress those people. He went in there as a demonstration of what His mission in all the world was all about. A beast of burden signified one that carried loads, and Jesus came to carry the loads of sin and [the] burdens of men. Note the kind of people that accompanied Him as He came into Jerusalem. There is a great multitude that spread their garments in the way, and others cut down branches. The Scribes and the Pharisees refused to accept Him as the promised Messiah. A great multitude followed Him, and they cried out, "Hosanna." This is taken from Psalm 118:25. The word means "save us" or "help us;" the people that are following Him in reality are the little ones that we have been reading about all the way through the book of Matthew. When He enters into Jerusalem it brings about the whole city being moved. The same words translated "earthquake" (Matt. 27:51). The multitude said that Jesus is the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. Nazareth was a despised place, and Galilee was sometimes called "Galilee of the Gentiles" because of its close association with the northern part of Palestine where the other kingdoms that surrounded it were Gentile.

Cleansing the Temple

Jesus goes into the temple, and this is a second cleansing of the temple (cf. John 2). The money changers were those who made arrangements to change money so they could pay the temple tax. Everybody had to pay the

temple tax. There were those who would make the change, but they charged for offering this service. Jesus overturned [their] tables. Doves [were] what the poor people used in offering sacrifices; those that were unable to offer a lamb had the privilege of offering a dove in the place of that. This indicates the kind of people that they were taking advantage of: the poor people. He said, *"It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves"* (Matt. 21:13). Jesus combines two passages together (Jer. 7:11 and Isa. 56:7). Prayer indicates several things. Prayer is an exhibition or demonstration of faith. The very idea of praying to God suggests the idea that one trusts God. Prayer is recognition of our dependence upon God. We realize our own inability. So the temple was symbolic of man's need of God and man's inability to deal with the problem of sin. The temple was the very heart of the Judaistic system; that's where God's presence dwelt. It symbolized all that had to do with redemption. They had changed it and made it a den of thieves. It had become a commercial enterprise. The tendency of man is to recognize the need of religion, but in so doing Satan lays hold of that and turns it into a commercial enterprise. After Jesus cleansed the temple, the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. That's placed there by Matthew by deliberate contrast. Look at the difference in the attitude of Jesus and the attitude of the people that had turned the temple into a commercial enterprise.

The chief priests and Scribes were sore displeased (Matt. 21:15). How could anybody be displeased with what Christ did? The blind and the lame in the temple [are] a picture of the little ones. They were not interested in these people, because they didn't have anything to contribute to the financial interest of the Scribes and the Pharisees. They could not enrich the treasury. Jesus said, *"Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"* (Matt. 21:16). That is these little ones understand what it is all about. They have not become infested with the attitudes of the Scribes and the Pharisees. *"And he left them"* (Matt. 21:17). This is the second time that we have come across language like this (cf. Matt. 16:4). What led Christ to just leave people alone? An attitude that is so controlled by material things that it is not receptive to spiritual truths.

He Lodged There

[He went] out of the city into Bethany and lodged there. The indication is, in the very word that is translated lodge, that he didn't stay in some home somewhere but rather spent the night alone. Jesus knew the attitude

of the people toward him, and so in order to avoid the implication of others, it was likely that He just spent the night alone. Knowing what He was facing, it may have well been spent in prayer. In the morning, He returns to the city hungry. That's an indication that He didn't spend the night with Mary, Martha, Lazarus (cf. Luke 10).

The Withered Fig Tree

In connection with the latter part of this chapter [there are] some references to the vineyard which goes back to Isaiah 5:1-7. Isaiah 5:7 tells us what He is looking for, and when He returned to the city [and] hungered that is a picture of a deeper hunger. He was looking for truth and righteousness. He was looking for the attitude that we have been discussing in the book of Matthew, and that is what He didn't find. As far as their ritual and ceremony was concerned, they had all that, but He was looking for something else. He was hungering for righteousness; He found only the leaves. Their ceremonies and rituals were only leaves. He said, *"Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever"* (Matt. 21:19). Luke's account tells us that the tree dried up at its roots. This is a picture of the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel because it has failed to develop its attitude, has dried up at the root, and there is no place for it.

"When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!" (Matt. 21:20). Judgment was closer for the nation of Israel than they thought. Jesus said unto them, *"Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing ye shall receive"* (Matt. 21:21-22). When sin entered the world, faith became the foundation of man's spiritual life. It's a broad term that includes trust and obedience. When He said, "If ye have faith and doubt not," that is what James said (James 1). [This is] figurative language indicating the value of faith in overcoming difficulty. It is a reminder of how faith overcomes difficulties, and the real difficulty that man faced was sin. It is through faith that the greatest of all difficulties is overcome. Verse 22 is very often misapplied. It's unfortunate that so called "miracle healers" try to take this passage and make you believe that whatever you believe and ask God for He will do for you. The Bible does not teach that. John [says] that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us (1 John 5), but 1 John 3 says that He hears us if we do the things that please Him. Therefore our prayers must always be conditioned upon God's will.

The Chief Priests, Elders, and Pharisees

Christ is in the temple. He did not ask the Scribes and the Pharisees to let Him go into the temple and teach. He just walked into the temple, cleaned it out, and then began doing some teaching. The chief priests and the elders said, *“By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?”* (Matt. 21:23). They controlled the ones that did the teaching in the temple. Jesus answered them, *“I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or from men?”* (Matt. 21:24-25). John was the forerunner of Christ. Both Isaiah and Malachi prophesied of the work of John in preparation of the Christ entering into his ministry. We learn from Luke 7:29, 30 that they rejected John’s baptism. They knew enough about John to know that John was indeed a prophet sent from God, but if [they said] that He is a prophet that God sent, His question will be, *“Why didn’t you believe him?”* They didn’t want to admit that. They were concerned about maintaining their place and position among the people. They didn’t want to lose that. Look at the dishonesty of these people. They admit that John was a prophet, and yet they say they know they have not believed what John said. They went to Jesus and said, *“We cannot tell”* (Matt. 21:27). Here were the Scribes and the Pharisees that claimed to know everything. They acknowledged before the people their lack of knowledge which they had been claiming at the time to have. Jesus said, *“Neither will I answer your question.”*

Jesus gives an illustration or a parable (Matt. 21:28-31). Underscore, *“the will of the father,”* because that is what it is all about. John came and preached, and they rejected him. The little people listened to what John had to say, repented, and accepted John’s baptism. Jesus said when you saw that, that ought to have had an effect upon you and caused you then to have repented of having previously rejected the preaching of John.

Another parable [is given]. You have the picture of God creating the nation of Israel and giving the laws to hedge them in and keep them in waiting for the law to bear its fruit and have its effect in the lives of people. *“When the time of the fruit drew near”* is the coming of Christ into the world. The husbandmen took the servants, beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Here you have the prophets of the Old Testament. Last of all [the householder] sent his only son whom they would reverence – Christ. When the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, *“This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance”* (Matt. 21:38). They caught him, cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. You

have a picture of how they had reacted toward the prophets. Finally God sent His Son who was to be the heir. They said let us take it away from Him. He asked them what was going to happen. They answered, *"He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons"* (Matt. 21:41). We are moving towards the idea of the rejection of the nation. They have had Christ offered to them, and now the groundwork is laid for that rejection. Christ would become that chief cornerstone. *"Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"* (Matt. 21:43). That has a double significance. It's a reference to preaching the Gospel to Gentiles and against the Jewish nation, but even more it's a reference to the church itself which is called a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:5). [What] the nation of Israel had had in the Old Testament would be taken away from them and given to the church; there's where the fruit is to be found. This stone would cause one to be broken – broken in heart over its sin. To that one there is hope; redemption would be offered. The other would be ground into powder. That is what would happen to the Jewish nation. Of course, that is the picture of the final judgment. Here are people that say, "He's talking about us." *"But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude because they took him for a prophet"* (Matt. 21:46).

Read the Text

1. "Is it not _____ for me to do what I will with _____ own? Is thine eye _____, because I am _____?"
2. "Even as the Son of man came not to be _____ unto, but to _____, and to give his life a _____ for many."
3. "And the _____ rebuked them, because they should hold their _____: but they cried the more, saying, Have _____ on us, O Lord, thou son of _____."
4. "And said unto them, It is written, My _____ shall be called the house of _____; but ye have made it a den of _____."
5. "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never _____ in the scriptures, The _____ which the builders rejected, the same is become the _____ of the corner: this is the _____ doing, and it is marvelous in our _____?"

Research the Text

1. What parable is given to illustrate that the last would be first and the first last?
2. How many times did Jesus cleanse the temple during His ministry?
3. Why did Jesus overthrow the tables of the money changers?
4. How did the chief priests and Scribes respond to the crying of the people in the temple?
5. What two parables did Jesus use to describe the chief priests and Pharisees?

Review the Text

1. Though many are called, why are only a few chosen?
2. Compare the desire of James and John's mother to the desire of the two blind men sitting by the way side.
3. What is illustrated in Christ's entrance into Jerusalem?
4. What was Christ looking for when He looked at the fig tree?
5. Explain Matthew 21:44.

Lesson 10

Christ and the Jewish Leaders

Lesson Text: Matthew 22-23

Two Parables

“Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables” (Matt. 22:1).

Jesus is answering the attitude of heart they have and what they are thinking. He presents the kingdom in view of their misconception of it. The kingdom is set forth [in] some parables. Three invitations are given [in the first parable]. The first invitation is given (Matt. 22:1-3). Then a second invitation is given (Matt. 22:4-7), and a third invitation is given (Matt. 22:8-10). The kingdom [is] set forth under the figure of a wedding feast. This is intended to show the contrast between Christianity and the Gospel, which will begin at Pentecost, and the Jewish system. [Verse 3] is a reference to the Jewish leaders and their influence upon a great many among the nation. Verse 4 [moves] to the day of the apostles or Pentecost. Here you have the provision that God had made for redemption beginning in Acts 2 at Pentecost. Then you have a description of the reaction of the Jewish leaders towards that (Matt. 22:5). The book of Acts [gives] a picture of what's taking place here. [Verse 7 is] the destruction of the Jewish Nation, the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, and the [destruction of the] temple that took place under the Roman army in A.D. 70. With the end of the Jewish nation, you have the picture completed in verse 8. With the end of the Jewish nation and the destruction of the city, the picture is given in verses 8 to 10 showing the universal invitation. That's what's signified in verse 10. That was done simply to indicate the universal invitation that is now extended, and the Jewish nation has been put in the background.

Verse 11 [gives] another picture [as] He shifts from the national aspect to the individual aspect. The Jewish nation as a nation failed, but some of the individuals in that nation did not fail. When [the king] came in to see the guests, he [saw] a man which did not have on a wedding garment. Who is this person that came in without a wedding garment? A good commentary on that is Colossians 3:10-18. The man in the wedding garment is the man that's described in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. Here then is the man that has on the wedding garment. Who is he? Paul described him as being one under the influence of the Gospel baptized into Christ (Col. 3), and then out of that comes the remolding and the remaking of life with the attitudes described in Colossians 3. Does that describe me? When I stand

before God in judgment, I am not going to be simply judged due to the fact that I am a member of the church. Unless I am clothed in the attitudes that the Gospel remolds and remakes, then I'll stand before him speechless. *"Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Matt. 22:15). That's the consequence of failing to have on the wedding garment.

"For many are called" (Matt. 22:14) - Here is the Jewish nation in its collective capacity. They were all called, but few were chosen. The word chosen there might be a little misleading. The word literally means "choice" or select. That word suggests the idea that many are called that the invitation goes out to everybody, but out of all that are called there are some that are choice. Who are they? These are the people [described in] Matthew 5, 6, and 7. They are described as God's jewels (Mal. 3:17). They are the people that have the attitudes that we have been talking about. [It's] not enough to be called, but the question is, "Do I belong to God's select group?" [It's] not hard to figure that out if I take the Book and let the Book tell me.

The Questions

"Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk" (Matt. 22:16). Look at the change in attitude. What are they concerned about? All that Christ has said [has] had no influence upon them. They are still thinking about their own will and their own way. [This] section will have the Herodians, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the lawyers. The Jewish nation was divided into sects. The absence of every attitude that we have been talking about in the book of Matthew is in the lives of [these] men. The failure to allow Christ to remold their attitudes produced the sectarianism and the divisions that there were in the Jewish nation. The word heresy means a self chosen opinion. Division grows out of self chosen opinions. What made these sects? Self chosen opinions. What led to these self chosen opinions? The refusal to allow the attitudes that we have been talking about to be produced in their lives under the influence of the Gospel of Christ.

The Herodians were interested in politics. They were political maneuvers looking for Herod to overthrow the Roman government. They thought that was the solution to their problems. They come to Christ [with] a question (Matt. 22:16-17). [Jesus] said, "Show me some money," and they produced the money themselves showing they had it in their own

possession [and] were using it. He said, "Whose image is on that?" They said, "Caesars." He said, "Then render unto Caesar the things that are Caesars, and remember that Caesar is not the final authority." There is an authority that is above Caesar, and that's God. Therefore render unto God the things that are God's. They didn't know what to do with Him.

The Sadducees came to Him, and they said there is no resurrection. They gave Him a problem, "Whose wife is she going to be out of all seven?" (Matt. 22:23-28). Jesus said, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). That's not to say that they did not know this very Scripture and could not have quoted the Scripture Jesus referred to. There is a difference in being able to quote a scripture and knowing the scripture. He didn't say, "I was the God of Abraham, but I am the God of Abraham." The way that you solve all problems is found first in the admission of the power of God. How in the world can there be a resurrection? The power of God will take care of it. That upset them. He put the Sadducees to silence.

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it," (The ASV says, "a second." It is important to put "a" there because a second grows out of the great commandment.) *"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"* (Matt. 22:35-40). This first and great commandment is not taken from Exodus 20 where the Ten Commandments are given but rather from Deuteronomy 6. The second one is taken from Leviticus 19:18. The book of Leviticus is a priestly book where you have the sacrifices, the priests, and the tabernacle. Leviticus 19 shows the effect and the impact that God intended for the priesthood, the sacrifices, and the tabernacle to have on the lives of the people. Therefore this commandment comes out of that priestly book. Love is a spiritual principle. What Jesus did was He took the word love, drove a nail in that, and then said you can hang every commandment upon that because that's the master motive. It is not any wonder that the Bible has so much to say about that.

"While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ?" (Matt. 22:41-42). The Jews were looking for a Messiah, so He asked the Pharisees, "What is your concept of the Messiah?" They said, "The son of David." How then did David in spirit call Him Lord? Jesus points out that they misunderstood the nature of the promised Messiah. They were thinking about Him as a political Messiah; Jesus said

that's not so. "David called him Lord" means that the Messiah was not merely a political Messiah, [but] He was a spiritual Messiah. David understood that. That indicates His authority [and] His sovereignty. That's the only way that He could be David's Lord and son at the same time. Therefore His authority is in the spiritual realm. As a result of this, that put an end to their question. They were not able to ask Him anything else.

Jesus' Picture of the Leaders

In chapter 23, Jesus first speaks to the disciples and the multitudes. The Scribes and Pharisees set in Moses' seat. The idea is they seated themselves there. They claimed authority to bind things and make laws that God did not give them. *"All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe,"* (that is in keeping with what the Law actually taught), *"that observe and do, but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not"* (Matt. 23:3). They bound heavy burdens (Matt. 23:4). The idea [is] of overloading a beast of burden. He described [them as] blind guides and told why they are blind (Matt. 23:16). They cleaned the outside of the cup and platter, while on the inside they are full of extortion and excess (Matt. 23:25). [They were] whited sepulchers (Matt. 23:27). He describes them as serpents and vipers (Matt. 23:33). What a description of people who are religious! What happened? That's what happens when people ignore what we have been talking about. Religion can make some of the cruelest, hard-hearted, and perverted people you will ever find. The Scribes and the Pharisees are not the last people that religion has made that kind of people out of. We now come to the failure to apply [the beatitudes] to life. There are eight beatitudes, and there are eight woes in this chapter. The neglect of the beatitudes in life will produce just exactly what's described here.

Contrasting the Leaders and the Disciples

The Scribes and the Pharisees had seated themselves in Moses' seat. They assumed authority that God didn't give them. They were interested in recognition, so they did what they did in order that they might obtain recognition. They bind heavy burdens (Matt. 23:4). When we fail to properly interpret the Bible and understand the nature of God, we turn religion into a burden. God never intended for religion to be a burden. It's a joy! They did what they did for show (Matt. 23:5-6). This shows that their religion was being used to satisfy their own ego. They loved the uppermost rooms at the feasts, the chief seats in the synagogues, greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi (Matt. 23:6-7). Look at the contrast

that Jesus makes between these leaders and His own disciples. *“But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in Heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ”* (Matt. 23:8-10). The word “father” is used here in the sense that spiritual life comes only from God. There’s no man on earth [who] can impart to me spiritual life. Therefore there should never be anyone that stands between me and God. Then there is the authority that belongs to Christ, and I should never seek to take that on myself.

He shows the real place of all leadership. The real basis of leadership is in service. *“But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant”* (Matt. 23:11). That’s hard to learn because [we’re] interested in people doing for [us]. We’re back to the beatitudes where He called the attention to the importance of humility.

Woes

The word “woe” involves two things: wrath and sorrow. As we read these verses with the woes that Christ directed towards the Scribes and Pharisees, we ought to read them in the realization that they are coming from a broken heart. He spent His life trying to lead these people; they had spurned and rejected [Him]. The chapter closes by indicating the kind of attitude that He had when He said [these things], *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not”* (Matt. 23:37). Jesus is saying it in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount.

They shut out the kingdom of God. Luke tells us that they had taken away the key of knowledge. We need to understand the nature of God and the scheme of redemption as God set forth in order for us to properly lead people. If we do not, then we’re going to shut the kingdom of God against people. How important it is then that we understand the nature of the kingdom!

Their religion was one of pretense (Matt. 23:14). In fact, He described them as hypocrites. The word hypocrite means a pretender. Literally, it came to mean a person that had a cover or a mask over his face. Their religion had become a cover or a mask over what they were like on the inside.

He talks about making proselytes. There were two kinds of Gentiles that came under Judaism. One is called the God-fearer described in the

book of Acts, and the other was a full proselyte. The God-fearer, such as Cornelius in the book of Acts, cast off idolatry, accepted the one God, and lived according to the moral principles set forth of the Law. He remained uncircumcised. The full proselytes were circumcised, and for all practical purposes lost their Gentile identity. They were interested in making full proselytes, and that is especially true as far as the Pharisees were concerned. They had so perverted religion that instead of saving people they were making them even worse than they were.

Jesus shows how they failed to recognize where the real values of life were (Matt. 23:16-19). We can get our values confused. Where are the real values of life? They had their values confused. They brought the gift to the altar, and they valued the gift but failed to realize that it was the altar that gave the gift significance. They came to the temple, and they failed to realize that it was God's presence in the temple that made it significant.

He talks about their giving and said they had missed the weightier matters of the law as judgment or justice, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23). These ought they to have done and not to leave the other undone. Then in verse 24, we see inconsistencies. All the way through the emphasis here is on the confusing of values.

"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" (Matt. 23:25). The Jewish system had a ceremonial law that had to do with making it possible for them to approach God in worship. For example, if someone touched a dead body, they were ceremonially unclean and could not go into the temple and worship. They were careful to see that they did not come into contact with anything that was unclean thereby being prohibited from coming into God's presence in the temple, but on the inside there was hatred that would kill somebody. To be clean on the inside is to be motivated and controlled by the attitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. In verse 27, He talks about being as whited sepulchers. That gets back to the ceremonial law about touching dead bodies. They painted all the sepulchers white so they would be careful not to step on a grave and be made unclean unable to go to the temple. They wanted every one of them painted so that they could see them.

"If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets" (Matt. 23:30-31). That does not mean that they were the fleshly descendants of the ones that killed the prophets. That means that they were in attitude like the ones that killed the prophets. They'll demonstrate

that as they're going to kill Christ. He says, *"Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers"* (Matt. 23:32). Recall that [God] said the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full (Gen. 15:16). Thereby God's patience was extended to the people that lived in the land of Canaan. The very statement that God made relative to the Amorites who were living in the land before God ever gave it to them is now made of these very people themselves. Judgment day is going to come; there's a limit to God's patience.

"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt. 23:33). Unless I allow the attitudes in the Sermon of the Mount to mold my life, I'm lost forever. If I can't change my attitude, I can't go to heaven. There's not going to be any ugly attitude people in heaven. These people had refused to listen to what He said and [refused to] let Him remold and remake them. Jesus said there is only one place that's left for you. *"I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and Scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city"* (Matt. 23:34). Can [we] not see that a mean, ugly, persecuting attitude is contrary to everything that we've studied?

"That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zechariah" (Matt. 23:35). In the Jewish Bible, 2 Chronicles was the last book in the Old Testament. What He is saying is this is the way they've acted from the time of Abel and until the last line of the Old Testament was written. That's the way they lived. From the time of Abel down to the end of the Old Testament, here are attitudes that people had. If you read 2 Chronicles 24:21, you will find that Zechariah the priest rebuked Joash the king and the nation for the way they were living and [was] stoned to death. As the prophet died, he said God will require it at your hands based upon Genesis 9:6.

"Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation" (Matt. 23:36). Underscore the phrase, *"all these things,"* because that phrase runs through chapter 24. In fact, you need to go down to Matthew 24:34 and draw another line because what He is going to say now will be relative to the fall of the Jewish nation. There's no way you can make that apply beyond that generation. He said all! Not some of these or a few of these, but all of these things will come on this generation. Everything between verse 36 and Matthew 24:34 has to do with the fall of the Jewish nation. These leaders have misled the people, and they're going to lead the nation down to ruin. Therefore Jesus said to them that all these things shall upon this generation. *"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate"* (Matt. 23:38). When Jesus walked out of the temple, He bade it goodbye. The idea

that God's presence will ever return to an earthly temple in Jerusalem is denied by this passage. The nation had fulfilled its purpose, but the leaders refused to recognize that. Jesus now is going to bid them goodbye. *"Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"* (Matt. 23:39). That moves you then up the Pentecost, and finally to the fall of the Jewish nation when all that was ended.

Read the Text

1. "The _____ of heaven is like unto a certain _____, which made a _____ for his son."
2. "And he saith unto him, _____, how camest thou in hither not having a _____ garment? And he was _____."
3. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt _____ the Lord thy God with all thy _____, and with all thy _____, and with all thy _____."
4. "Saying, The _____ and the _____ sit in _____ seat."
5. "O _____, Jerusalem, thou that killest the _____, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have _____ thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her _____ under her wings, and ye _____ not."

Research the Text

1. What two parables are found in Matthew 22?
2. What groups of people asked Christ questions as they tried to entangle Him?
3. What question did Jesus ask the Pharisees?
4. Why did the Scribes and the Pharisees do everything that they did?
5. How many woes did Jesus pronounce on the Scribes and Pharisees?

Review the Text

1. What is represented by the three invitations in the parable of the marriage feast?
2. What is represented in the wedding garment?
3. In what spirit were these woes pronounced on the Scribes and Pharisees?
4. What did Jesus mean when He referred to the Scribes and Pharisees as the children of those who killed the prophets?
5. What phrase is found in Matthew 23 that helps us understand Matthew 24?

Lesson 11

Fall of Jewish Nation and the Final Judgment

Lesson Text: Matthew 24-25

Fall of the Jewish Nation

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, see ye not all these things?" (Matt. 24:1-2). That phrase comes back from Matthew 23:36, but here it is identified specifically with the temple. The temple was the heart of the Jewish system. He's talking about the Jewish system, what's going to happen to that Jewish system, and the signs that will enable people to know when that Jewish system is drawing toward an end and when the Roman army is going to overrun it. *"And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"* (Matt. 24:3) He hasn't changed the subject; it's still about the fall of the Jewish nation. The sign of His coming is in relationship to the fall of the Jewish state. The word world there is age. Mark doesn't use the end of the world, but only gives the two rather than the three. He's going to announce what would take place in connection with the signs that would precede His coming in judgment on the Jewish nation. *"Take heed that no man deceive you"* (Matt. 24:4). He realized the danger of their being deceived. *"Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet"* (Matt. 24:6). The end of the Jewish state is not yet. He talks about the persecution, how false prophets will arise, and [how] iniquity will abound (Matt. 24:9-12). Love of many will wax cold, but they that shall endure to the end [will be saved]. Under the situation that they lived from Pentecost until the fall of the Jewish state, many of them failed to endure. That's what the Hebrews letter is all about. They were turning back from the church and going back down to the temple. That's the end that He has under consideration. The word saved doesn't always have reference to spiritual salvation. The nation of Israel was saved from Egyptian bondage, but that was a physical deliverance. The language here is in reference to deliverance in relationship to the problem concerning the fall of the Jewish nation. *"And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"* (Matt. 24:14). It is said, "this Gospel." [It is] this Gospel concerning Christ and His announcement

concerning the fall of the Jewish nation [that] shall be preached as a witness to all nations so that when [it] happens the very record that Jesus gave will be a testimony of His Deity and of all He claimed to be.

He referred to the prophecy of Daniel. That prophecy concerning the Roman powers overrunning that nation. There are some that think the abomination of desolation is reference to the Roman people standing in the temple. It's a reference to the Jewish nation itself. It had crucified Christ and had become an abomination in the eyes of God. Therefore God's judgment was brought upon the Jewish nation because they had crucified Christ. They had refused the Gospel and thereby the desolation of abomination. The desolation of that city was because that city had become an abomination in the sight of God. He talks about them fleeing in Judea to the mountains. You can see that's bound to be local. Can you imagine the final appearance of Christ and you [head] out to a mountain in Judea? He talks about the problems in relationship to the flight. The gates of the city would have been closed on the Sabbath day; therefore pray that it would not be on a Sabbath day. The great tribulation [that] people [are] talking about today [has] already been. That great tribulation took place whenever the Jewish nation fell. Verse 28 points to the carcass of the Jewish nation. *"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in Heaven"* (Matt. 24:30). Then shall appear the sign not the Son of man on earth. You won't need a sign of Son of man [in the Second Coming]. He [will] be in person. When the Jewish nation fell, Jesus said that's a sign that I'm right where I told you I was going. According to the history about the fall of the Jewish nation, not a single faithful Christian was destroyed when the nation fell. The reason for that was the things Jesus said here that enabled them to see that is was near.

That Day and Hour

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels in heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36). The signs were to identify the fall of the nation, but the end of the Jewish state was not the final judgment. There are not any signs in connection with that. *"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"* (Matt. 24:42-44). His final return will be unexpected. There's a reason for that. If we knew the day when the Lord was coming, think

about how many people on that day would get real religious, but it would not be because they have accepted the values that we have been talking about as we study the book of Matthew. The person that lives by those values will be ready any day the Lord comes.

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?” (Matt. 24:45). There’s an interesting thing in connection with the word householder. One of the definitions of the word householder is the word “servant,” but it’s a different word for servant. The only other time this word is found anywhere in the Bible it’s translated healing (Luke 9:11; Rev. 2:2). Thayer defines it as service rendered by anyone to another. Then in a specific way medical curing or healing. The word household here is a term in reference to the church. The word household here then indicates one that renders loving service or service that is healing. The idea is that the church is made up of people that engage in the ministry of healing. That’s what Jesus came to do. He’s called the Great Physician. The church is a place where the hurts of sin are healed through that which the Lord has done. It’s a place of spiritual healing. A redeemed life is one that has been healed of the hurt that has been brought about by sin. Out of that then we in turn in that household become engaged in the ministry of healing the hurts of others. The word carries with it the idea of something that is therapeutic. *“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 fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken”* (Matt. 24:46-49). To smite is the ministry of hurting. He does not think that he’s going to be called into account unto God today. *“And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matt. 24:51). This healing ministry that is described here as belonging to the household of God grows out of the attitudes that are set forth back in chapters 5, 6, and 7. Without the principles found there, I’ll not be engaged in this kind of ministry. “Blessed is the servant” – there’s our word [that] Matthew 5 begins with.

Two Parables

Then we have two parables in chapter 25. There’s an interesting thing to note in each one of these parables. The Lord is absent in all three of them, and thereby leaving people under the influence of the Gospel to have the Gospel to work in their lives the character that is acceptable unto God.

"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" (Matt. 25:1-2). We are right back up to Matthew 24:45. Here are people then that are anticipating His coming, and they are divided into two groups. There is a difference in their expectation. Five of them were expecting Him to come and were ready for His coming. The oil that they carried extra was wise. Therefore when the word went out [that] the bridegroom is here they were ready. The five foolish while they were waiting for the bridegroom to come they were like the evil one that's described back in the latter part of chapter 24. They were looking for Him, but they were not looking for Him to come at that time. Therefore they were not ready. In the parable of the ten virgins, we have underscored the importance of our looking for and expecting the Lord to return. How many of us do that? The fact that He has delayed His coming has left upon us the impression He may not come, and because of that it has an effect upon my life. This teaches the fact that character cannot be borrowed. I can't borrow poverty of spirit, meekness, mercy, or any of the others from other people. These are things that have to go into my own life. *"But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not"* (Matt. 25:12). Here were people who lacked the qualities of life that are essential to pleasing God. To stand before God in the judgment with the lack of the qualities of the Sermon on the Mount is to hear Him say, "I don't know you."

The second parable has to do with the man traveling into a far country. He *"called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods"* (Matt. 25:14). His goods are representative of the responsibilities of the kingdom of God that are placed into the hands of His people. The basis of those goods being distributed is in keeping with the vast abilities that are given; talents are not abilities. Very often when this parable is discussed, talents are used as abilities, but they are not abilities. Here is the responsibility that goes along with being in the kingdom of God, and the emphasis that's given in this parable is faithfulness in using what you have. We are going to see who is a faithful and wise servant. The man that had five talents brought his five talents back and said, "I have gained five more." *"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"* (Matt. 25:21). The Bible expects of us and demands faithfulness. People that do not have the same abilities can be just as faithful with whatever abilities they have. Because when I meet to the fullest my responsibilities by being faithful, that's all the Lord expects of me.

Do faithfully whatever you can do, and that's all the Lord expects of

you. To fail to do that is to be like the man that had one talent. He was afraid, and he said, "The Lord's a hard, austere man. I was afraid, carried it, and buried it in a napkin." God is not hard and austere. He doesn't overlook sin, but He's a kind, loving Father. He wants us to understand that.

"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:31-32). Here we have the sheep and the goats. These are the same people simply described under different terms. The sheep are the ones who have built into their lives the qualities and the characteristics that we've been studying about. The goats are the ones who were without those attitudes and dispositions of heart. *"Then shall the king say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Matt. 25:34). He's had that in mind from the very beginning. He said, *"For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me. I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me"* (Matt. 25:35-40). Here you have the outcome of these people. The actions that they engaged in were never conceived to be meritorious works. These were works of faith and love. In fact, here is a picture of that loving ministry of healing. On the other side, He said to some, *"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Matt. 25:41). I was hungry, and you did not engage in the ministry of healing the hurt. I was thirsty, and you did not engage in the ministry of healing the hurt. I was naked, and you did not engage in the ministry of healing the hurt.

Read the Text

1. "And Jesus said unto them, _____ ye not all _____ things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be _____ here one stone upon another, that shall not be _____ down."
2. "And this _____ of the kingdom shall be preached in all the _____ for a witness unto all _____; and then shall the _____

come.”

3. “But of that _____ and _____ knoweth no man, no, not the _____ of heaven, but my _____ only.”

4. “And _____ of them were _____, and _____ were _____.”

5. “And he shall set the _____ on his _____ hand, but the _____ on the left.”

Research the Text

1. What is meant by “all these things”?
2. To what prophecy did Jesus refer in Matthew 24?
3. Who knows when the final return of Christ will be?
4. What two parables are recorded in Matthew 25?
5. What is the difference between the sheep and the goats?

Review the Text

1. How would you show that Matthew 24:1-35 is in reference to the fall of the Jewish system?
2. How would this Gospel of the fall of the Jewish system be a witness?
3. What was the fall of the Jewish nation a sign of?
4. Explain the difference between the wise and foolish virgins.
5. What are the talents a reference to in the parable of the talents?

Lesson 12

The Last Days of Christ

Lesson Text: Matthew 26

Introduction

In chapter 26, we begin the study of the last days of Christ. These were truly trying days. The things that men are most generally afraid of Jesus faced every one of them. For example, Jesus was faced with [the] disapproval and [rejection] of men. Jesus was faced with misrepresentation. They called false witnesses in order to try to condemn Him, and that's a part of our life. Friends, even the ones that were closest to Christ, failed Him in some of the dark hours through which He passed. There's nothing unusual about that. As Jesus faced this, He knew what the ultimate outcome would be. Here's the secret of how He faced it. Right always wins. Jesus knew that all He was going through would not be the end. He saw the cross, but He saw beyond the cross. [When He] referred to the cross He always talked about being raised the third day.

Various characters are mentioned in chapter 26, but we need to leave Christ on the center of the stage and not let some of these characters become the dominate thing that we are thinking about. All the characters that surround Him are secondary. We'll have our minds out of focus if we allow Christ to lose the center of this chapter because this is what He's been moving towards since the very beginning of chapter one when we read about His birth.

Two Days

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings" (Matt. 26:1). You can see how He's drawing toward the close now. There's an interesting thing to be noticed in verse 2 and verse 5. Jesus said, *"Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified"* (Matt. 26:2). Jesus said that in just two days [He was] going to be crucified. Look at His enemies [and] what they said, *"But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people"* (Matt. 26:5). They said we are going to get Him but not during the feast of Passover. Jesus said two days, and it's going to happen. In the midst of all of this these people thought they were in control, but they were not. They said we are not going to let it happen during the feast of Passover, but Jesus says, "Yes, it is." This is an indication that what happened did not happen by accident in spite of what all men did. As far as God is concerned, things are

never out of control in spite of all that men do. Peter talks about how that by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God they took Him and crucified Him (Acts 2). You can see that as it's unfolding here.

"Then assembled together the chief priests, and the Scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who is called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill Him" (Matt. 26:3-4). Look at their attitudes: conniving, sneaking, slipping around, and cruelty. Instead of healing hurts, they are determined to hurt somebody. They made up their minds we are going to hurt Him. We ought to learn that religion that has that attitude has missed the whole meaning of what religion is all about.

A Memorial

Verse 6 introduces an incident that occurred days before this, but Matthew places it here because of the emphasis that he wants to give to it. Look at the contrast of this woman and these leaders. *"Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the Leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat. But when His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? For she has wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her"* (Matt. 26:6-13). In spite of all that Jesus had said about His betrayal and crucifixion, it seems that none of the disciples had been able to grasp it. Here is a woman that had an understanding heart. Jesus said she did this in view of [His] burial. How could she do that unless she had some insight into that? Here you have an example of one out of loving devotion that is seeking to heal the hurt of Christ. It seems [only] Mary really understood anything about what was happening. Think about the loneliness of Christ under circumstances like this, and then see this woman motivated by love that is interested in helping, healing, and encouraging [by] pouring this ointment out on Christ. Nobody told her to do it; it came forth out of her own heart. The only time that Jesus ever said that a memorial was to be for anyone is right here. He said where ever this Gospel is to be preached this is to be a memorial for her. Why would He

make this unusual statement? In Mary you have an exhibition of the sum of the Sermon on the Mount. Here is a demonstration of the woman who allowed the teaching of Christ and the things that He had set forth to mold and to make her life producing within her this attitude of love. She took a precious ointment and poured it out on Christ. Let us not forget this memorial.

Judas was critical of it which is a reminder that love is so often misunderstood because it is so contrary to how the world thinks. The very idea of suffering and not striking back is contrary to anything the world knows. We know from John's account that Judas came along and said this shouldn't have been done because he was a thief. The influence that Christ had wanted to have through His teaching had lost all of its power on Judas. Judas is an example of one that let the material things of life lay hold of his heart, He even [stole out of] the treasury of the Lord that was intended to serve the priesthood and the poor. He never gave up his materialistic thinking. One may hear everything that Christ says and still allow the influence of the world to so dominate his life until he'll betray the Lord. This world has tremendous appeal, and material things are powerful. Judas heard all the teaching the other apostles did, but he didn't open his heart to it. Jesus said it is better for that man to never have been born than to allow that to take place.

The other apostles were influenced by what [Judas] said. John tells us that Judas was the one that started it. [We] need to learn to be careful about who [we are] influenced by. Jesus tried to tell Judas and the disciples they were wrong, [when He] came to the defense of Mary. What she'd done in the pouring out that ointment sent a fragrance up. Jesus said that loving devotion and loving sacrifice [are] like the fragrance of the flowers that add beauty to life. In spite of what Mary had done, Judas was not influenced by it.

What Will You Give Me?

Judas then went to the chief priests. *"What will ye give me?"* (Matt. 26:15). You ought to mark the question that Judas asked the chief priest. That tells the story of his life. His life was one of getting not giving. What is my life like? Do I live for what I can get or what I can give? One of the real changes that takes place in the life of a Christian is that the center of their life is changed. Instead of living to get, they live to give. Judas has missed all of that. Mary had lived to give, and when she took that alabaster [box] of ointment and broke it on Christ, it was an expression of a life that was living

to give to somebody else. Judas life was self centered.

They are planning now, and they are going to sell Christ for thirty pieces of silver. They are willing to buy what they want regardless of any principles of right or wrong. They were as materialistic as Judas was. They were determined to have their own will by buying it. Judas set [out] to betray Him.

The Feast of the Passover

The disciples come to Christ and want to know where [they are] going to eat the Passover. He said, *"Go into the city to such a man and say unto him the master saith, My time is at hand"* (Matt. 26:18). Jesus said after two days (Matt. 26:2). They said not during the feast, but Jesus said my time is at hand. The unleavened bread [was a reminder] that they were to put all evil out of their minds. Look how the Scribes and Pharisees misunderstood the feast of the Passover. They're going through it, and it has no effect on them. It doesn't mean anything to them at all. Jesus said, *"I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples"* (Matt. 26:18). They made ready the Passover and came in to observe the feast of Passover. As they were eating Jesus said, *"One of you shall betray me. And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I? And He answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born"* (Matt. 26:21-24). Let us not miss how it was Judas betrayed Him. When the material things of life dominate my life and I violate principles that are laid down in the Bible for Christians to live by because of the material things of life, then I'll be guilty of doing what Judas did. Then Judas asked, *"Is it I?"* (Matt. 26:25). Jesus said, *"You're the one."*

Then we have the institution of the Lord's Supper in relationship to the Passover. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration. It is a reminder of mans hopelessness and helplessness, of God's love, care, and concern, and of God's way of healing the hurts that sin brought about. First Corinthians 10 reminds us that it is a communion with God. It's also a covenant, *"For this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom"* (Matt. 26:28-29). It means that I have entered into the covenant demonstrating my devotion and love for the same things the Lord lived and died for.

"And then when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of

Olives" (Matt. 26:30). Psalm 113-118 are the hymns that they sung. Psalm 113 and 114 were used at the beginning of the supper. Psalm 115 talked about the glory of God. Look at all that Christ is going through. The very psalm that they are reading talks about living for the glory of God, and that's what He's doing. Psalm 116 talks about death, life, and service. Psalm 117 is a song of praise. Psalm 118 where the KJV uses mercy the ASV talks about the loving kindness of God. In view of this Passover and what's fixing to take place, they have observed the feast of Passover, and the Lord has instituted the Lord's Supper in anticipation of the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension. While doing that, at the end of it they are singing the song of the loving kindness of God. Jesus never lost sight of the fact that in spite of all the suffering that He was going to go through it was not outside of God's love and care.

Verse 31 is a quotation from Zechariah 13:7, *"I will smite the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."* Zechariah prophesied that the shepherd was going to be smitten, and the sheep were going to be scattered. The next verse [shows] the confidence of Christ in the midst of all of it. *"But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee"* (Matt. 26:32). The cross did not stop Him from leading as the shepherd. He knew what was going to happen.

Then Peter, overconfident, said, *"Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended"* (Matt. 26:33). Jesus said Peter was going to deny Him three times. If I ever get to the place where I think I can handle it on my own without God's help and I don't recognize my need of God, that's the very time I'm in trouble. Peter didn't believe that. He would come to realize that he is not nearly as strong as he thought he was. Peter said, *"I'll die with thee, but I will not deny thee."* The rest of the disciples joined in and said the same thing, but they didn't know what was coming.

Gethsemane

Jesus entered into Gethsemane. He leaves them and goes to pray. He *"began to be sorrowful and very heavy"* (Matt. 26:37). Again you see the loneliness of Christ. He came into the world to fulfill a mission, and in a sense, it was His mission alone. He had to do what no other man could do. Therefore the loneliness of the hour through which he's passing. Three times in these verses you'll find the statement made, *"Thy will be done."* He came into the world to do the will of God. The only way the will of God could be done was by the cross, and He's ready to go.

He said, *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”* (Matt. 26:41). Our flesh gives us the problem. He’s prayed three times, and then we have the betrayal of Judas. He said, *“Whomsoever I shall kiss that same is he: hold him fast”* (Matt. 26:48). They didn’t have to hold Him. His love and devotion held Him to pass through this. A servant’s ear was cut off, and Jesus said, *“Put up again thy sword...they that take the sword shall perish with the sword”* (Matt. 26:52).

[Jesus] said He could have called legions of angels, but He didn’t call them. He came to fulfill the Scriptures. They came to take Him with swords and staves. Can you not see the fear that grips their hearts? This was done that the scripture might be fulfilled. Peter followed Him a far off. We have a description of the misrepresentation of them bringing Him to try Him and the things that were said. They spat on His face, buffeted Him, and smote Him. Look at the mistreatment. It’s all because of the absence of the attitudes that are in the Sermon on the Mount.

The Love of Peter

Peter loved the Lord, and he followed Him all the way through this. Peter is an example of when love gets in difficulty. There’s the peril of following a far off. Peter was confused. When love gets confused about things, it stands in peril. If my love for God ever becomes confused in understanding God’s love, then my love for God is in peril. Love will be challenged. Peter’s love was challenged. When I go out into the world from day to day my love for the Lord is challenged. There is the cowardship of love. Peter denied Him. Love can become a coward. Then there is also love that is contrite. Peter went out and wept bitterly. In that weeping bitterly there’s love’s confession. The reason that Peter got there is his love for the Lord, though it went through trying times, was never let go. If that love can lead me to a broken heart and out of a broken heart to confess my sins, that love will see me through. I’ll never let Him fully go. I’ll find my way back. From time to time we’ll find our love like Peter’s. It’ll be confused and be challenged. We’ll act a coward, and we’ll deny Him. But then if our love will bring us to bended knees and a broken heart, there will always be a way for us. He’s ready to accept us. That love will lead us through this life, and we’ll go to heaven when we die.

Read the Text

1. “Ye know that after _____ days is the feast of the _____, and

the Son of man is _____ to be crucified.”

2. “But they said, _____ on the feast day, lest there be an _____ among the people.”

3. “Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this _____ shall be preached in the _____ world, there shall also this, that this _____ hath done, be told for a _____ of her.”

4. “And Jesus said unto him, _____, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and _____ hands on Jesus, and took him.”

5. “And _____ remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the _____ crow, thou shalt deny me _____. And he went out, and wept _____.”

Research the Text

1. Who is on the center of the stage in Matthew 26?
2. Why didn't the chief priests want to take Jesus during the feast days?
3. What did Judas ask the chief priests?
4. What did Jesus institute during the Passover meal?
5. How did Jesus spend the night prior to His betrayal?

Review the Text

1. What is the significance of the two days before Jesus would be betrayed and crucified?
2. Compare the attitude of the woman with the attitude of Judas.
3. How can we be guilty of doing what Judas did?
4. Of what is the Lord's Supper a commemoration?
5. Describe the love Peter had for the Lord.

Lesson 13

Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Commission

Lesson Text: Matthew 27-28

Tried and Crucified

Chapter 27 tells us that the chief priests are ready to do what they can to get rid of Him. Those two days are drawing to an end, [and] they are making their plans. They followed Him to the Garden of Gethsemane; they are going to take Him. They bring Him to Pilate. They are doing this to try to make legitimate what they are [doing]. They had already had an illegal trial. To a trial at night was contrary to what they were supposed to do.

Judas brought the money back to the chief priests, and they said they didn't want it. He announces he has betrayed innocent blood and left the thirty pieces of silver with them in the temple. The money that Judas thought meant so much to him he is now doing what he can to return it and to get rid of it. In Judas you see the ultimate issue of sin itself. Sin promises a great deal, but it never delivers. Here's the end of a life that lived for the material things and ignored the spiritual values of life.

Then you see a strange thing with the chief priests and the elders. They think about what they are doing. Look at the inconsistency. They say it's not lawful to put this money in the treasury, because it is the price of blood. What a strange way that people have of thinking about material things. Instead of doing what they should, they try to in a charitable way, cleanse that money from the sin that has been attached to it. They said we will buy a field where we can bury people that don't have a burying place. They are not the last ones that have tried to use charitable means to cover up bad attitudes of mind and heart. Then was fulfilled a prophecy, and a potter's field was bought. Have you ever thought about that potter's field and what it was like? A potter's field is where pieces of pottery which are broken and unfit for use are cast aside. The money that was spent for the blood of Christ was used to buy a potter's field. Have you ever thought about humanity being like that pottery that was marred, broken, and cast aside, and the blood that bought that potter's field bought us because that's what I was? The blood of Jesus gave me another opportunity to be remade or to be remolded.

They bring Him to Pilate, and Pilate asked Him if He's [the] king of the Jews. Jesus said, "*Thou sayest*" (Matt. 27:11). When Pilate said, "Are you the king of the Jews," He replied, "Yes, I am," showing that the kind of king

that Christ came into the world to be was the king that we are going to see nailed to the cross. Jesus never doubted what His mission was; He never came into the world for a temporal earthly mission. He didn't come to set up an earthly kingdom. He came to set up a kingdom that was spiritual in nature.

When He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He had nothing to say. Pilate said, *"Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?"* (Matt. 27:13). He didn't answer a word. Jesus knew the accusations were false; He knew that Pilate knew they were false. Why should He get into any such discussion as that with Pilate when they both knew what the Jews were trying to do? Pilate then decides that he'll try to get Christ off his hands, so he is going to release one and offers them Barabbas. They spurn him, and the chief priests cause them to say that they want Christ instead. Pilate was upset because his wife sent to him saying, *"Have thou nothing to do with this just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him"* (Matt. 27:19). Here you see a man that was guided by political thinking. In fact, that's the way he came to be king. When the nation of Israel had said give us a king like the nations round about us, here is the ultimate end of that demonstrated in Herod. Before it's all over they'll end up saying, *"We have no king but Caesar."* The problem that Pilate has is trying to save Christ and at the same time pacify the Jewish people. *"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person. See you to it"* (Matt. 27:24). Pilate recognized that Christ was innocent. *"Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children"* (Matt. 27:25). Jesus was scourged and delivered to be crucified.

We have the picture of the soldiers who were materialistic people to the very end. All they see in Christ is what they can get out of Him. They have a job to do, and they'll become interested in obtaining His clothes. Look at how they treated Him. They stripped Him and put on Him a scarlet robe in mockery. They platted a crown of thorns and put it upon His head and a reed in His right hand. They bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him saying, *"Hail, King of the Jews"* (Matt. 27:29). Do you recall the first time that we ever read about a thorn in the Bible? A part of the curse of sin was that God said the earth would bring forth thorns and thistles (Gen. 3). It's not by accident that when Christ went to the cross He had a crown of thorns placed upon His head, [because] that symbolized the curse that He was bearing because of the sin of the world. When they placed that crown of thorns upon His head, they were doing more than they ever thought

about. The one that has come to undo the curse that has been brought about by sin has a crown placed upon His head made out of thorns. They spat upon Him, took a reed and smote Him on the head, mocked Him, took the robe off Him, and put on His own raiment. They lead Him away and crucified Him. Simon was made to carry His cross. They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall, and He would not drink it. He would not be doped or His senses dulled in any way. In bearing the load of sins, He accepted the full load of it. *"They crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there"* (Matt. 27:35-36). Jesus came into the world to redeem man, and here are people that are interested only in the secondary blessings. They're interested in His clothes. The world doesn't realize how many secondary blessings they enjoy because Christ has come into this world. The freedom that men has grows out of the fact that Jesus lived upon this earth, walked among men, and the influence it had upon the earth. They placed over His head the accusation, *"This is Jesus the king of the Jews"* (Matt. 27:37). That's Matthew's way of announcing that's exactly what He came into the world to be. They crucified Him between two thieves. How appropriate that He should hang there! [The thieves were] a symbol of what His mission was all about. The reaction of the thieves symbolizes also the reactions of men. Luke tells us one of them was a penitent thief. They continued to mock Him saying, *"If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross"* (Matt. 27:40). He stayed there because He wanted to. If He had left that cross, you and I would be living in despair. There would have been no hope. They said, *"He saved others; himself he cannot save"* (Matt. 27:42). They are mocking the very heart of what Jesus came into the world to live for and to do. In reality, the price of serving others is giving up our own lives in service to others. Here is the example that He gave. *"He trusted in God; let Him deliver him now, if He will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God"* (Matt. 27:43). They said it mocking [that] He trusted in God; indeed that is what He did.

This is the most difficult verse in the entire Bible, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Matt. 27:46). Somehow while He was on the cross, bearing the load of sin, He was left alone but not because God didn't love Him or didn't care for Him. He was sinless Himself, but in bearing the load of sin and since sin separates in some manner, He was left alone. All of that was because of my sins and yours.

"The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent" (Matt. 27:51). That's God's way

of saying you made light of trusting in God, but in order that you might know that He did not trust Him in vain He took the veil of the temple and rent it. [This] signified that the work of the priests was done. There will be no further place for them. He's opening up the veil so that everyone may be a priest. Instead of God being veiled in darkness, He has revealed Him and opened Him up so men can see what He's all about. God took the earth and shook it under their feet saying, "I want you to know people don't trust me in vain." The graves were opened. People [that] had been dead [were] walking down the street. That's God answer to all He claimed to be and to those that trust in Him. If you are ever tempted to not trust God, read that passage. See graves open and the dead walking and remember that's God's answer to those that denied that it's worthwhile to trust God. The centurion recognized the meaning of it and said, "*Truly this was the Son of God*" (Matt. 27:54). The women followed afar off. Christ is then crucified. When He's nailed to the cross, God puts the sun out at mid day. [This was] God's final answer to the fact that you can trust Him. God said I'll put the sun out midday to remind you that no one trusts me in vain.

He's buried, and the women followed Him to the tomb. The Pharisees are afraid that something is going to happen and remind Pilate that He said He would rise again. Pilate agreed to make a watch.

Resurrected

[In] chapter 28 we come to the first day of the week. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary come to the grave; they find that the stone is rolled away. They see an angel, and they want to know what's happened to Christ. The answer is given, "*He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay*" (Matt. 28:6). Part of the consequences of sin is the disintegration of the body. Men had been held in the fear of the bondage of death (Hebrews 2: 14-ff). What a great day! Christian people can walk out to the silent city of the dead, stand beside an open grave, and an open door to a better and brighter world. What a day that resurrection day was! These women are the ones that followed Him all the way. The men had forsaken Him. Here you see the strength of love and the value of love. It's even seen in the apostles but not [to] the same degree it is with the women. We know from the other accounts that these women went to the tomb with spices; they wanted to anoint the body of Christ. Why would they want to take spices knowing that the body had been anointed, wrapped, and placed in a tomb? We are reminded of the fact that love is interested in the personal touch. They didn't want to do it through

somebody else. How in the world will they ever remove that stone? There's a guard, but none of that can stop them. The power of love knows no end. That's the way that Jesus had touched the heart of these women.

"Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: Lo, I have told you" (Matt. 28:7). Jesus made an appointment with them before He died. He's on His way. They tell the disciples, and they go into Galilee.

The body is missing, and they accuse somebody of stealing it. [They] try to get false witnesses to justify it (Matt. 28:15-16). *"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted"* (Matt. 28:16-17). The resurrection was difficult for them to understand.

I Am With You Always

Then Jesus gives the commission, *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matt. 28:19-20). Look at what it says, "Lo I am with you always." In most instances, there is a relationship between the first of a book and the last of a book. The first chapter telling about His birth said that He is Emmanuel, or "God with us." It's not by accident that the last verse closes then by saying, "Lo I am with you." God with us ought to thrill every heart. His parting words are, "God is with you." Aren't you glad that as we struggle against the powers, the temptations, and the evil of the world it's not a struggle that we have to fight alone in our own strength? God said, "I am in it with you. I'll be there." I have help from One that's never lost a battle. The one that trusts God will always find that He's there. He'll never let you down (Heb. 13:5-6). God will be faithful to what He has promised, if you'll be faithful to Him. Learn like Christ to trust Him in every hour.

Read the Text

1. "Then _____, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was _____, repented himself, and brought again the _____ pieces of silver to the chief priests and _____."
2. "And Jesus stood before the _____: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the _____ of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou _____."
3. "And they had then a _____ prisoner, called _____."

4. "He is not _____: for he is _____, as he said. Come, see the _____ where the _____ lay."
5. "Go ye _____, and teach all _____, baptizing them in the name of the _____, and of the _____, and of the Holy _____."

Research the Text

1. What did the chief priests and elders do with the money which Judas returned?
2. What did Pilate's wife say to Pilate? Why?
3. What kind of king did Christ come to be?
4. What were the soldiers who crucified Christ interested in?
5. What did the women find when they came to the tomb on the first day of the week?

Review the Text

1. Describe the potter's field and what it is a picture of.
2. Explain why it was appropriate for Christ to be crucified between two thieves.
3. List the different miraculous events which transpired during the crucifixion of Christ.
4. List the different things which Christ endured the day of His crucifixion.
5. Explain how the end of the book of Matthew fits together with the beginning of the book.

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Editor's Page

Please, allow me to begin by saying Thank You, on behalf of Brother's Inc. Brother's Inc. was formed to make available Franklin Camp's material. Franklin Camp was a sincere, faithful, and scholarly Gospel Preacher. His material is some of the finest anyone could ever study. His insight to the word of God is truly amazing. It is with great pride and with tremendous respect for his work that we are making available this material. We have gone to great strides to maintain the very words of Bro. Camp. These books are not verbatim from the material he gave in his classes at Adamsville, but they are as close as we can get them. We wanted this material to be his, not our interpretation of his material. The CD's of Bro. Camp's material is available for anyone who might want a word for word account of what Bro. Camp said. We recommend this for teachers. It might give you a clearer understanding of the points he emphasized. The proceeds from this material are set aside for the **Franklin Camp Scholarship Fund**.

This material is made possible because of the support and work of many. We would be amiss if we did not say **Thank You**, to the McGee family for their generous contribution. Karen has been very generous in honor of her mother Christine. To each editor, who is giving countless hours to this project, **Thank You**. To the Board of Brother's, who have launched out on faith and a willingness to make available good, sound material to our brotherhood, **Thank you**.

Robert R. Taylor, Jr. said of Bro. Camp:

"His name is a standing synonym for Christian humility, Bible scholarship, loyalty to truth, opposition to all error and dedicated discipleship".

There is always a great need for good material. This material will help supply that need. May the glory be to God! May the benefits be eternal!

Editor in Chief

Ronnie Hayes

Time Table for Books to be Published

2011	2012	2013
<u>1st Quarter</u>		
Genesis	Exodus	Lev.
Colossians	Mark	Luke
<u>2nd Quarter</u>		
Joshua	Judges/Ruth	1 Samuel
Matthew	John	Acts
<u>3rd Quarter</u>		
Daniel	Prov-Eccl-Song	2 Samuel
I & 2 Thess.	1 Cor.	Romans
<u>4th Quarter</u>		
Job	Post Exilic Books:	Psalms
Ephesians	vol. 1 Ezra, Esther, Neh.	Revelation
	vol. 2 – Haggai, Zech, Mal,	
	2 Cor.	
2014	2015	
<u>1st Quarter</u>		
Numbers	Isaiah	
Galatians	Hebrews	
<u>2nd Quarter</u>		
Kgs./Chron. – vol. 1	Jer./Lam.	
Philippians/Philemon	James	
<u>3rd Quarter</u>		
Kgs./Chron. – vol. 2	Ezekiel	
1 Timothy	1&2 Peter	
<u>4th Quarter</u>		
Deut.	Minor Prophets:	
2 Timothy/Titus	vol. 1 – Joel, Jonah, Amos, Obadiah	
	vol. 2 – Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zeph., Hab.	
	1-3 John/Jude	