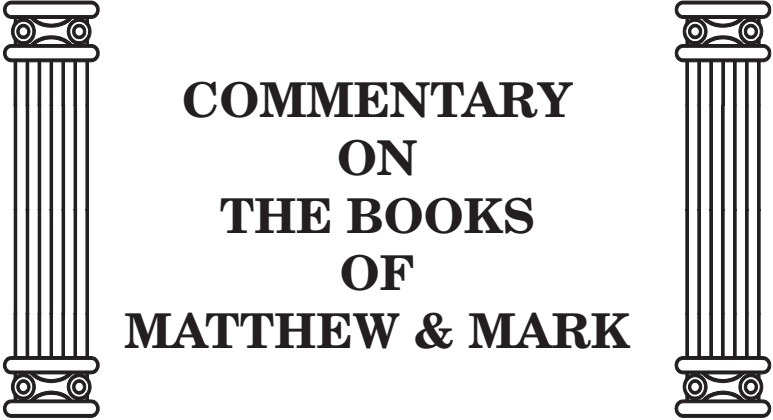


GOD'S MESSAGES BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES

VOLUME 1

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading.
(Nehemiah 8:8).



COMMENTARY ON THE BOOKS OF MATTHEW & MARK

BY
LEON D. STANCLIFF

B.A. ~ Speech
M.A. ~ Bible, Physical Science
Ed.S. ~ Education

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General Preface

A few comments are in order with respect to the motivation for writing this commentary set. I think it wise to mention some acknowledgements and explanations.

No one event or thought pattern initiated the work. I was fortunate in having been brought into this world and trained by one of the most godly women I have ever known. My mother had never attended college. However, she had the intelligence to have graduated if she had been given the opportunity. She loved the Bible and she loved God's family. She was the one who first instilled respect and love for the truth in the formative years.

My father was not a religious man for the years before I left home. He was a man who believed in hard work and believed there was a right and a wrong way to go about any task. I am proud to say that he became a Christian after I was grown. I owe much to his demand for discipline.

My brother two years younger than I had enrolled at David Lipscomb College. I visited him and decided I could do the assignments he was being given. Thus, I enrolled at DLC and graduated with a speech major and a double minor, one in Bible, the other in Chemistry. I am very grateful for the dedicated Christians who instructed me during those years at Lipscomb.

During my freshman year I met my wife, who was at that time Marie Underwood. Other than my mother, no other woman has as much influence on my life. She has encouraged me every step of the

way, in every endeavor for the Lord. She has taken great pride in this present commentary set and has labored many, many hours in proof reading, etc. This work would never have been completed without her.

I have preached in a number of congregations and owe a debt of gratitude to every faithful Christian who has listened to the sermons and encouraged me to study and learn more of God's Word.

My interest in both the Bible and nature led me to go on with a combination of the two in graduate work. After teaching science in high school, I was invited by Dr. J. Eldred Wiser to join the faculty at Middle Tennessee State University. Dr. Wiser is another Christian who has had strong influence in my development to the point where this commentary set was possible. Under his direction I earned a Master's degree in natural science.

Then I wanted to further my Biblical knowledge and enrolled at Lipscomb to earn a Master's degree in Bible. Those Bible teachers were both excellent students of the Word and were also fine instructors. I thank them!

Advanced degrees mean raises for university faculty, and thus lead to money in the pocket. I decided to enroll at Peabody College and earn a Specialist degree in Education. This would be useful in both my religious work and also in the teaching of science. That degree was added in 1965.

Paul Sain is due special notice. I believe it is due to the providence of God that our paths came together. I had labored hard to reach the point where publication could be considered. I did not have the expertise nor the equipment to do so. Paul had precious published some of my work. When

he found that the God's Messages commentary set was in need of a publisher, he generously offered to invest his time and share the finances with me. May God bless his dedication to the spread of the truth. I will not forget Paul's love for men's souls.

There is absolutely no way I could acknowledge each and every individual to whom I owe my thanks. There are hundreds.

Some who provided assistance have gone on to the grave. Some I have never met. I have drawn heavily from the works of Adam Clarke, Burton Coffman, B.W. Johnson, Albert Barnes, Alexander Campbell, the several authors of the Gospel Advocate New Testament Commentary series, and numerous other authors.

A note of explanation as to the nature of the commentary set is needed. Some of the commentary arose from class assignments at Lipscomb. As an example, the comments on the book of I Corinthians began as a class assignment. The reader will note that a number of Greek words are used in that part of the work. Normally I did not do this. I am not a Greek or Hebrew scholar. I was instructed to include some Greek in the paper I had to write for a class. Rather than rewrite the entire volume, I decided to leave the Greek terms in.

Other times the comments arose from a series of fifteen minute radio broadcasts. Each chapter of the New Testament was covered in one fifteen minute broadcast. The volumes in this commentary on Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are edited from those broadcasts. The reader will notice a slightly different style of presentation in those four Bible books.

Sometimes the beginning point has been series of

sermons preached on a particular book of the Bible at the Lord's Day worship services, or a topic of study which led to a lengthy period of research.

When we weld such a variety of factors together, we arrive at a ten volume commentary set on the entire New Testament. I am thankful to God for the opportunity to glorify His name, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Greatest Book the world has ever seen. If I have in any way helped just a few people to understand the truth, as it is found in the Bible, it will have been worth every minute of study and writing.

To God be the glory, for ever and ever!

Leon D. Stancliff
Murfreesboro, Tenn.
January 2000

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Dedication

This volume of the Bible Messages Commentaries
is dedicated

To:

Paul Sain and those of Sain Publications.

Some men and organizations continually
search for opportunities to serve God
and their fellowman.

We have found Paul Sain and his fellow workers
to be just such persons. God has blessed
them with skills and abilities.

Knowing that God expects faithful use
of that which is placed in human hands,
Paul and those who work with him are
fulfilling the expectations of their Creator
by making spiritually uplifting material
available to thousands of others.

May the Lord bless their labors.

~ Leon and Marie Stancliff

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Introduction To Matthew's Account Of The Gospel

The Author:

Matthew was one of the very first to hear and heed the call of Jesus Christ and serve as an apostle. He was a Jew who had served as a publican, or tax collector for the Roman government. The orderliness which would be necessary for that activity is seen in his record of the life, death and resurrection of the Lord. It is easier to outline his book than either Mark or Luke.

His work as a publican would certainly not have endeared him to the Jews. They despised those who served in this capacity. Too many of them collected more than they had to turn over to Rome, and then pocketed the rest.

The Date of Writing:

The book of Matthew was one of the first, if not the first book of the New Testament put in writing. The date is not certain. Some believe the order in which the four accounts of the gospel are placed in our present New Testament is the order in which they appeared. However, since both Matthew and Luke seem to have many parallel phrases and verses, to those in Mark, it may be that Mark was before either Matthew or Luke. Matthew does have several references to the temple in Jerusalem, as if it was still standing. That would mean it was written before A.D. 70.

The Nature of the Book:

Matthew had a keen interest in presenting the gospel to the Jews. He wished to show Jesus as the promised Messiah who had been prophesied by many of the Old Testament writers.

The church was extremely important to Matthew. He carefully includes Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and then adds that Christ's church will be built upon such confessions.

The account of Christ's return is heavily emphasized, as seen in the twenty-fourth chapter. Being prepared for the judgment is a major issue in the writing of Matthew.

Matthew presents Christ as the expected King of the Jews. The Lord will reign over a spiritual kingdom which can be entered only by those who possess certain characteristics suitable for the citizens of such a kingdom.

The book of Matthew has probably been read by more people than any other book of the Bible. It may have been read by more people than any book in the history of the world.



**The Book Of
MATTHEW**

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Chapter 1

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

Mat 1:2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

Mat 1:3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

Mat 1:4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;

Mat 1:5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

Mat 1:6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;

Mat 1:7 And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;

Mat 1:8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;

Mat 1:9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;

Mat 1:10 And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias.

Mat 1:11 And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:

Mat 1:12 And after they were brought

to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;

Mat 1:13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;

Mat 1:14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;

Mat 1:15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;

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

GOD WITH US

The person who opens his or her Bible to the first chapter of the New Testament may wonder why it begins with such a long list of names. I remember one time when I decided I would start memorizing the New Testament. I didn't get very far. All those names bogged me down and I decided to study in some other way.

There is a very good reason for those names. The four different accounts of the gospel serve different purposes. Matthew was particularly interested in proving to the Jews that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah who was to be the King of the Jews and the Saviour of the world.

God had made a number of prophecies and promises in the Old Testament. As we study in the book of Matthew, we will see many reminders that those promises and prophecies were fulfilled in the life of the Lord.

We go all the way back to Genesis. In Genesis 3:15 God promised that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. Matthew does not go back that far in his list of names because the Jews did not become a chosen people until the time of Abraham. However, the promise of victory over Satan began with Adam and Eve.

Notice Matthew begins his list of names with Abraham. This was because the Jews recognized Abraham as a beginning point of the Jewish nation from which the Saviour would arise. When God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, he made a very special promise.

GEN 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

The promise which was made to Abraham was repeated to Isaac and to Jacob. But it was first made to Abraham, and that is the reason Matthew begins his book with a genealogy which goes back to Abraham.

Mat 1:17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations;

and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

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

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

Jesus was not just of the seed of Abraham. He was also of the seed of David. If you look at the seventeenth verse of Matthew chapter one, you will see the names of both Abraham and David in the same verse. Just as God promised Abraham the world would be blessed through his seed, he promised David his seed would reign forever on the throne of Israel. notice the following passage from 2 Samuel.

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever (2 Sam. 7:12-14).

In Psalm 132:11-12 there is a similar promise.

The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.

From passages like these, the Jews in the time of the birth of Christ were watching for someone to be born into this world who would be a descendant of Abraham, and also a descendant of David. They expected him to bless the world and to reign on the throne of David, from the city of Jerusalem. Matthew shows in this genealogy that Christ was a descendant of both of these men.

The first chapter of Matthew is divided into two parts. The first part gives the genealogy of the Lord. The second part tells of the announcement of his arrival to Joseph.

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

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

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

Mat 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they

shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Mat 1:24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

Mat 1:25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Jesus was to be the Son of man, and also the Son of God. Mary, who was human, was his mother. While she and Joseph were still engaged, before they came together, the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and she conceived. Joseph was not the real father of Jesus. Mary became pregnant by the power of God. God was Jesus Father. Isaiah had prophesied centuries before this that a virgin would bear a child who would be called Emmanuel, or God with us. See Isaiah 7:14.

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

The Jews should have paid very careful attention to the teachings of Jesus. Of all the people of the world, they should have recognized who he was. Matthew makes it exceedingly clear that he fulfilled three major prophecies. He was of the seed of Abraham. He was of the seed of David. And he was born of a virgin.

There has been much uproar over the use of the word virgin in Isaiah 7:14. Some of the later translations use the term “young woman.” There are

those who believe the Hebrew word “Almah”, which was used in Isaiah 7:14 could have simply meant a young woman. The fact that Matthew 1:23 quotes this passage while telling us that Joseph had not known his espoused wife Mary, leaves us no doubt that Isaiah intended to say a woman would bear a son without the aid of a human father.

I would like to share with you two conversations I have had with others in past years. Both of the persons involved were highly intelligent people. Each of them suggested the same thing in slightly different ways.

The first man said he could not see why it made such a difference whether or not Jesus Christ was born of a virgin. He felt that all of us are brought to life by the power of God. Why make such a fuss about it?

I was a very young man at the time of the conversation. I really did not know what answer to give him. I felt that he must be wrong. But I did not know just how to reply to him. I now know he was making an extremely serious mistake.

Man had separated himself from God through his sin. God was forced to drive him out of the Garden of Eden and from the tree of life. Sin brings death. God was faced with a problem. How could he persuade man to turn away from his sin and live a holy life? He could let man try to find his own way back. But he knew man was not able to direct his own steps. He could have simply told man what to do and what not to do. He had done that in Eden and man had ignored him. If God just forgave man for his sin, he knew man would

simply sin again.

There was something else God could do. He could send his own Son into the world to take the punishment upon him. This would do several things at once. The sentence for sin was death. That sentence could be served by one absolutely perfect man. Secondly, by allowing his Son to take the punishment of sin for us, God could show us forgiveness must not be taken lightly. If it cost the suffering and death of the Son of God to pay the penalty of sin, we must not dismiss it as unimportant. Thirdly, sin is a result of selfishness. When man decides he will go his own way in spite of the directions God has given him, the result is sin. When Jesus came to earth, he showed us the nature of love. Love is the opposite of selfishness. Love flows outward toward others. Selfishness flows inward toward self.

What I am trying to say is that since Jesus was the Son of God, he could teach us a lesson which no mere man could ever teach. The lesson is found in the words of John 3:16.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The second conversation was with a young man who was a follower of the Bahai religion. This young man was convinced that Jesus was but one of a number of great prophets. He believed Moses was one of those prophets. He believed other prophets had lived after the time of Christ. He believed one

of these prophets had worked miracles as great as those of Jesus. His question to me was, “What is different about Jesus and any other prophet of God?”

The answer to that question is found in this first chapter of Matthew. Moses was not the Son of God. Mohammed was not the Son of God. The young man’s favorite prophet, Baha U’lah, was not the Son of God. Each of these men had an earthly father. Jesus Christ did not have a human father. He was the Only Begotten Son of God.

Both Jesus and his Father in heaven made sure that we could not miss that truth. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit alighted upon him and the Father spoke from heaven saying, “This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. At the Mount of Transfiguration God repeated those words and added three more, “Hear ye him!”

When Joseph found his wife was with child and the child was not his, he reacted as many men would today. He decided to reject her and put her away from him.

Then the angel appeared and told him his wife was not only faithful to him. She was to become the mother of a child who would fulfil the prophecies made to both Abraham and David. He would be known as “God with us.” and he would bless men by saving them from their sins.

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Chapter 2

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

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

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

Mat 2:4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

Mat 2:5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

Mat 2:6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

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

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

Mat 2:9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and

stood over where the young child was.

Mat 2:10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

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

ESCAPE FROM HEROD

The second chapter of Matthew tells us how Satan tried to destroy the young child Jesus before he was two years old. Later on, in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, John told of this same effort by the Devil.

Revelation 12:1-4 puts it this way.

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

Satan knew of the prophecies concerning the coming of a Saviour who would take away the sins of the

world. Satan did not have the slightest intention of allowing that to take place. His main purpose from the beginning has been to go about as a roaring lion seeking to devour as many of God's children as possible. God seeks to raise a family to be with Himself in eternity. Satan, the great red Dragon, seeks to kill every one of them that he can.

Satan was not the only one who knew a Saviour was to be born. There were wise men from the east who came to Bethlehem to see him. How did they know about Jesus? For one thing, they had seen his star. Having seen his star, they had come to worship him. But, we must ask what caused them to connect the star they saw with the birth of Jesus. I believe the answer to that is the prophecies the wise men had read. Almost straight east of Jerusalem is the land of Babylon. That is where the Jews had been in captivity for seventy years. The wise men had surely studied the Word of God as Jeremiah, Micah and others had told of God's plan for saving man.

King Herod also knew about the prophecies of a new king who would arise from among the Jews. Herod was troubled and immediately decided to nip any such plans in the bud. This was Satan's opportunity. He could use the jealousy of Herod to kill the newborn Son of God.

Herod called the chief priests and the scribes of the Jews together and asked them where to look for the babe. They told him about the prophecy of Micah 5:2, which said a ruler of the Jews would come from the small town of Bethlehem.

Mic 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though

thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

With this information, he went to the wise men and asked them when the star had appeared. He then knew to look for a child under two years old, in the town of Bethlehem.

He sent the wise men on their way, telling them to reveal the whereabouts of Jesus to him as soon as they found him, so that he also could worship him. This was a deliberate lie. His only purpose was to find the baby and destroy him.

The wise men found the child and worshipped him, offering him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Apparently they had been traveling for months to arrive at Bethlehem, since Herod decided to kill all of the children under two years old to make sure he got the right one.

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

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

Mat 2:14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed

into Egypt:

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

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

Mat 2:17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

Mat 2:18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Now God stepped into the picture. He warned the wise men not to report the location of the Christ child to Herod. They were to go back by another way.

He also sent an angel, warning Joseph to take Mary and Jesus into the land of Egypt to protect him from being murdered by King Herod.. This was a fulfilment of yet another prophecy.

Hosea 11:1 Out of Egypt have I called my Son.

Right here, let me point out how useless it is to fight against the God of heaven. Herod made the same mistake millions of others have made

through the ages. Men cannot fight against God. He is all wise and men are not. He is all powerful and men are not. The outcome is clear before the contest begins. God will win. He won against Pharoah when Pharoah resisted the command of God through Moses to “Let my people go.” Later, he won against the prophets of Baal when Jezebel tried to fight against God’s true prophet, Elijah. God won against the host of Midianites, as Gideon routed them with only three hundred men. My friends, do not be found fighting against God. Gamaliel spoke sound words in the following verses:

Acts 5:38-39 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

Herod was doomed to fail. Even though Jesus was saved from King Herod, many other children were not. Throughout the entire village of Bethlehem, women were weeping in sorrow over the murder of their infant children. Matthew points out that this also was in fulfilment of a prophecy made by Jeremiah long before.

Jeremiah 31:15 A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

This is a strange prophecy. We ask ourselves

what Rachel had to do with the weeping women of Bethlehem. There is an answer. Rachel died in childbirth, near Bethlehem. Her tomb was there. Jeremiah is first of all talking about the weeping of the women of Israel as they are taken into captivity in Babylon. But the prophecy clearly talks also about the weeping of the women of Bethlehem over the bondage in the time of Herod resulted in the death of their babies. Little did they realize the baby Jesus would offer hope for the release of mankind from such sorrow and grief.

We do not know how long Joseph and his family stayed in the land of Egypt. Jesus was twelve years of age when he was taken to the temple in Jerusalem and was found there answering and asking questions of the doctors and lawyers. We can only guess that it may have been as much as several years. Then again, it may have been only a matter of days or months. The Bible reveals to us only that information which is useful to the entire plan of God. We are reminded of John's words.

John 21:25. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.

Let's think about another matter here. Do you realize God could have struck Herod dead at the moment he decided to destroy all of the young children in the city of Bethlehem. Men too often try to outguess God. They try to pin him down to their own level of wisdom. However, God's thoughts

are higher than our thoughts. His ways are higher than our ways (Isa 55:8-9).

Isa 55:8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

Isa 55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

There was a reason why God acted as he did. Perhaps some contacts were made by Jesus in the land of Egypt which were important to either the Egyptians or to Christ himself. If we could but realize how weak and foolish we are, we would be much more careful about trying to judge

Mat 2:19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

Mat 2:20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

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

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

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

While the family was in the land of Egypt, Herod died. God sent another angel to tell Joseph about Herod's death and instruct him to take Mary and Jesus back into the land of Israel.

Apparently Mary had not yet given birth to other children. Mary did have other children. In the thirteenth chapter, Matthew tells us of a time when Jesus had come into the country where he was raised. The citizens were astonished at his wisdom and his mighty works.

Mat 13:35-36 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?

Since Joseph is only told to take Mary and Jesus back into the land of Israel, it seems that he was the only child she had at that time.

Joseph was still afraid. He knew Herod's son Archelaus was ruling in place of his father. Now God used another means of instructing him. The Lord used a dream to warn Joseph to return to Israel. This was sufficient to cause Joseph to go back. We are told that he went into the northern portion of Israel, into the province of Galilee.

Luke tells us Joseph and Mary lived in the city of Nazareth in the province of Galilee before Jesus was born. When Caesar Augustus made a decree

that everyone should be taxed, Joseph and Mary traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be taxed. That was the reason they were in Bethlehem at the time of Jesus birth.

So Joseph simply returned to the same village where he had been living in former days. There are two things which should be said about the family going to live in Nazareth.

The first point is that this was again a fulfilment of prophecy. Matthew says that one of the prophets had predicted Jesus would be called a Nazarene. This is interesting. There are two things this prophecy could mean. The first is that Jesus would be called a Nazarene because he was raised in the city of Nazareth. The second is that the word Nazarene means “separated one.” Those who took the Nazarite vow under the law of Moses were expected to live extremely pure and holy lives. Certainly Jesus did just that.

It is important to notice that Nazareth was not the best community in which to raise a child. It had a reputation for being a wicked place. John's account of the gospel tells us about Philip going to find Nathanael to tell him about Jesus. Philip told Nathanael they had found the one whom Moses and the prophets had written. It was Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. When Nathanael heard that he replied, *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth (John 1:46)*.

Certainly it is important to place our children in the company of good and upright companions. But it is possible for one to rise above his environment.

It was my privilege to teach school for many years. Most of the time, good students came from good backgrounds. But in a number of cases an excellent student would come from a very bad background. That student had the character to set his or her goals high and to work hard to achieve them. Jesus had just such character. While living in a town with a reputation for producing wicked citizens, our Lord kept himself spotless and without sin.

Jesus set the example for us in many ways. Whether in the company of saints or sinners, he found a way to build up the souls of men. When he was with his disciples, he dealt with a group of holy and pure persons. He lived before them and taught them the commandments of Jehovah. At other times he found himself in the company of sinners such as the woman taken in adultery. At all times he attempted to purify others, rather than allowing others to corrupt him. We can do the same.

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Chapter 3

The entire third chapter of the book of Matthew deals with the baptism of our Lord. Since the Bible does not waste space, it must be that God considers this event to be of great importance.

The four accounts of the life of Christ do not all contain the same records. Some events are recorded in all four books. Some are found in two or three of the gospel accounts. Matthew closed chapter two by telling of Joseph's return with his wife and the young child Jesus to the village of Nazareth. He begins chapter three with Jesus baptism at thirty years of age. He leaves out the visit of the family to Jerusalem at the time Jesus was twelve when he told his parents they should have known he must be about his Father's business. If we are to get the most complete picture of the life of our Lord, we must place all four records side by side. For the present time it will be the book of Matthew.

Matthew seems to be very interested in the work of Jesus rather than a record of his early years. The fact of the matter is that very little is said by any of the four writers about the Lord from the time of his birth to the time of his baptism. O how interesting it would be for us to know how the Son of God acted when his brothers or sisters picked on him. When my own children were small I can remember each of them tried to lay the blame for their fusses and fights on the others. Since Jesus never committed sin, he would never have been at blame for any mischief. What would it be like to raise a perfect child? Mary and Joseph had that

experience.

As much as we might like to know such things, the Bible moves over nearly thirty years of Jesus early life without even a whisper except for his birth and his visit to the temple at the age of twelve. We must be satisfied with what we are given.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mat 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

Mat 3:9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father:

for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

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

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

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

John the baptist was given the job of introducing Jesus Christ to the people. Over four hundred years before the birth of the Lord, the prophet Malachi had prophesied that a messenger would come and prepare the way for the Lord as he came to his temple.

Malachi 3:1. Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

That messenger was John the baptist. In the fourth chapter of his book, Malachi adds more information about this messenger and connects him

with the prophet Elijah.

Malachi 4:5-6 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Isaiah also told about a voice which was to prepare the way for the Lord.

Isaiah 40:3-5 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Now, after long, long years of waiting, the messenger had come. The Messiah was at hand.

Conditions did not call for a smooth and gentle preacher dressed in fine linen and feasting upon the food of the king's court. The Jews had rejected the teachings of God. They had set up their own doctrines and commandments. They were proud and haughty. God had to be blunt with them. And so he picked a man and trained him in order that he might be up to the task. John had lived in the wilderness, dressed in rough camel's hair clothing and ate locusts and wild honey. John would preach

the things men needed, not just the things they wanted to hear.

The people heard John. They knew he was an unusual person. They came from all the region round about to hear his message. Was he the Christ? Was he Jeremiah? Was he the great prophet that Moses had said would be like unto himself? John replied, No? He was only the one who was to introduce one who was far greater than he.

John held nothing back. He called them a generation of vipers who needed to repent. He told them it was useless for them to think they would be safe just because they were the descendants of Abraham. God would know perfectly well which of them were prepared for the coming of the Lord. Not only would God know which were good and which were evil, He would take His axe and cut down every one of them who failed to bring forth a fruitful life, and who had refused to turn away from sin.

No man could mistake what John was saying. John placed them in only two classes. There were some who were like valuable wheat which a farmer would gather into his barns and proudly care for and protect it. The other class was like the chaff which was left over when the wheat was threshed. It was fit only to be burned up.

John informed his listeners that when the man he was introducing to them came, he would not stop with baptizing them in water. He would gather his wheat and burn up the chaff in everlasting fire. The Bible has much to say later about the help God gives to the righteous through the Holy

Spirit. It also has much to say about the eternal punishment in the fires of hell which awaits the evil and the wicked.

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

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

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

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

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

Among those who came to John was Jesus Christ. There is reason to believe Jesus traveled for a number of miles to get to the part of the Jordan River where John was baptizing. Just as it was when he was found in the temple earlier, he knew he must be about his Father's business. That business would soon take him throughout the entire area of Palestine. But first he must be properly introduced by John the baptist.

John became concerned about the matter. He had

been baptizing men who had repented of their sins. Now Jesus was asking to be baptized. John knew Jesus was a far better man than he was. He told Jesus that it should be reversed. Jesus should be baptizing him rather than being baptized by him.

But Jesus insisted! His reason was that it was necessary that he be baptized to fulfil all righteousness. We need to think about these words for just a moment. Since Jesus did not have to be baptized for the remission of his sins, what did it mean when he said he must be baptized to fulfil all righteousness? I believe Jesus was saying baptism serves more than one purpose. The Bible leaves no doubt that baptism is necessary for the remission of sins.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

It is recorded in Acts 22:16 that Saul was told to *arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins*. Certainly Jesus was telling us no responsible man is completely obedient to the will of God if he refuses to be baptized. Jesus Christ was baptized to fulfil all righteousness. If we are to honor the commands of our Heavenly Father, we will do the same. When Jesus insisted that he must be baptized, John baptized him. Jesus is the head of the body which is the church. He was the first to be baptized into that body. Every person who is baptized today is added to the body of which Christ is the head.

Then an amazing thing happened. As Jesus came up out of the water of the Jordan River, the heavens were opened up and John saw the Holy Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon him. As the Spirit alighted upon Jesus, a voice from heaven spoke saying, *This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Right then, John the baptist knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that Jesus was the one for whom he had been preparing the way. We are not told about this in the book of Matthew, but John the apostle tells of John the baptist's feelings at this time.

When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit alighted upon Him. Acts 2:38 tells us the Holy Spirit is given to every man or woman who repents and is baptized for the remission of those sins.

John 1:31-33 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

There are different measures of the Holy Spirit. Jesus apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Such baptism allowed them to perform miracles. The gift of the Holy Spirit today is not intended to empower the Christian to do miracles. It is the

indwelling of the Spirit which brings forth the fruits of the Spirit, such as those listed in Galatians 5:22-25.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Gal 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Gal 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Gal 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

According to the first verse of the next chapter of Matthew, immediately after his baptism, Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. We will have much more to say about those temptations in the next chapter. It is important as we close this study of chapter three to notice these temptations took place right after his baptism.

I would like to draw some very important lessons from Jesus baptism. Although it was different in that Jesus had no sins to be washed away; in several other ways it is like the baptism of men and women today.

First, Jesus baptism was by immersion. If the translators had actually translated the Greek word for baptism, it would have been translated as immersion. It means to dip, to plunge, or to immerse. No one was ever baptized for the remission of their sins by either sprinkling or pouring water over them. Please notice that Jesus came up out of the water just before the Holy Spirit descended upon him. He had been immersed.

Secondly, it was immediately after Jesus baptism that the Father in heaven testified to all those present that Jesus was his Beloved Son in whom he was well pleased. This agrees with various passages in the Bible which speak of our becoming recognized as the children of God.

In the third chapter of the gospel according to John, Jesus told Nicodemus that,

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

Two verses later, he said,

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Paul teaches the same truth in Romans.

Romans 6:3-4 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Yes, one is expected to rise from the water of baptism to walk a new life. He is then to be a child of the Father in heaven, in whom the Father may be well pleased.

Thirdly, the Spirit of God led Jesus into the

wilderness to be tested of the Devil. We may expect a similar experience. With the help of the Spirit of God, we will be expected to walk out into the wilderness of sin and meet every temptation Satan places in our way.

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Chapter 4

In the third chapter of Matthew we talked about the Baptism of Jesus. We found that Jesus was baptized to fulfil all righteousness. Immediately after he came up out of the water of the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit alighted upon him and the Father in heaven said, *This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Mat. 3:17). I pointed out that this is somewhat similar to our own baptism. When we are baptized, we are promised the assistance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). We are also recognized from that time on to be children of the Father in heaven (John 3:3-5).

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

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

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

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

The fourth chapter of Matthew tells us Jesus was then led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. That is just what happens to every newborn Christian. He or she must face the temptations which Satan will certainly use on

them. The Devil tried to use King Herod to destroy Jesus at his physical birth. He also tried to destroy him after his baptism by tempting him. Every new Christian may expect to face strong temptation right after his baptism. Satan will start his work early. Then, if you succeed in defeating him, he will flee from you for a while. But he will return again and again to see if you have weakened.

After Jesus entered the wilderness, he fasted for forty days and forty nights. Forty is an interesting number in the Bible. At the time of the flood, it rained for forty days and forty nights. Moses life can be divided up into three periods of forty years each. He spent forty years in the palace of the Egyptian Pharaoh. There were forty more years tending flocks in the land of Midian. The final forty years he led the people of Israel through the wilderness. Elijah lived on the strength of one cake and a cruise of water for forty days (I Kgs. 19:8). And now in the verses we are studying, Jesus fasted for forty days and nights.

It seems that forty is a number connected with testing and preparing for greater service to God.

At the end of the forty days, Jesus must have been very very hungry. The Bible simply says, *he was afterward an hungered*. We must not think of Jesus as being able to stand this period of fasting any easier than you or I would stand it today. It is certain that he possessed miraculous powers which were greater than the powers you and I have. But, we are clearly told in the following verse:

Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest

which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

At the end of those forty days we can be sure he had lost many pounds of weight. He would have been weak and so famished for food that things which would ordinarily have been sickening to think about eating would have looked good. Humans have been known to eat rotten garbage and leather shoelaces when they get this hungry.

It was while Jesus was in this condition that Satan came to tempt him. Satan always attacks at our weakest points. I think Jesus deliberately stayed away from food in order to prove he could stand up under the strongest temptations Satan could offer. John the baptist had lived on locust and wild honey in the wilderness. Jesus could no doubt have found the same food. He apparently invited Satan to test him by making himself ravenously hungry.

And so Satan took the challenge. He has always believed he was able to outwit God. He was convinced he could embarrass God in the Garden of Eden. He thought he could outwit Jehovah when he told God he could make Job curse God and die. Now, he was sure he could break down the Son of the Heavenly Father and make him disobey him.

Satan tempts humans by appealing to their selfishness. He has three main ways of temptation. Two of them are related to lust and the appetites of the flesh. The other is pride.

I John 2:16 says,

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Satan is called the Prince of this world (John 16:11). All three of these are centered on what **I** want, not what others need or want. Love serves others. Selfishness cares only about **me**.

Satan had succeeded in getting Adam and Eve to disobey God in Eden. He used these same three tools of temptation. Let us notice how he did it. First, he suggested the real reason God had forbidden them to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden was that it would make them as wise as God himself. When Satan made that suggestion, he was appealing to the pride of life. He then persuaded Eve to look at the fruit and she found it pleasant to the sight. This was Satan's appeal to the lust of the eye. She also decided it would taste good. This was Satan's appeal to the lust of the flesh.

Since these had worked so well in the past, Satan was ready to try each of them on the Son of God. He first tried the lust of the flesh. Jesus was as hungry as one can get. Satan knew Jesus had the power to turn even the stones into bread if he chose to. So he suggested Jesus could very easily remedy his hunger in just a few moments. All he needed to do was put his power to work.

Why did Jesus not do as Satan had suggested? His answer to Satan gives us the reason. Jesus had some lessons to teach. These lessons would be

learned by men and women throughout thousands of years. The first lesson was that the Word of God is more important than filling the stomach with food and drink. In other words, spiritual food is more important than physical food. Jesus said, in Matthew 4:4

It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Notice that there was a choice between thinking about one's own stomach and thinking about God. Will we center our thoughts on self, or God?

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

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

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

Satan realized he had been defeated on his first try. Jesus placed the Word of the Father before his own appetite. This caused Satan to make another try. This time Satan used the pride of life. Jesus

was the Son of God. He could depend upon his Father to protect him. Satan took Jesus to one of the highest places in the temple area. Then he called on him to prove that his Father in heaven would protect him in a miraculous manner. Jesus was to jump off that high place and see if God would send angels to keep him from being hurt when he landed.

Do you see how powerful this temptation was? It is a very important thing to have a Father like Jehovah. Young boys sometimes get into bragging matches about whose father is the most important. It is a matter of pride. My father is more important than your father. Also Satan was trying to get Jesus to put the Father to work doing just what Satan wanted him to do. Satan would be in charge, not the Father in heaven.

Jesus could see through the temptation easily. Again, he replied by saying, "It is written." This is always a good answer to Satan's temptations. If we will fill ourselves with the knowledge of God's Word, we will be able to defeat Satan. Jesus said,

It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God (Matthew 4:7).

The pride of life will cause a man to do what I call "testing God's soap." If a man has confidence enough in the Father that he is convinced God means what he says, the man will not be constantly testing God to see if he will get him out of trouble. God tells us *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful,*

who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (I Cor. 10:13). We are not to deliberately place ourselves in a situation where God will have to bail us out to prove he can do it.

That is what Satan was asking Jesus to do. He was to deliberately jump off the temple and see if his Father would bail him out. Jesus had absolute confidence in his Father. He knew his Father had the power to protect him in danger. He did not have to test or tempt him. Satan could not destroy Jesus with the pride of life.

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

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

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

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

The third temptation makes use of more than one of the tools of Satan. Jesus was taken to an exceedingly high mountain. There, the Devil

showed him all of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. He offered to give Jesus all of these kingdoms, if he would fall down and worship before him.

I do not know just how Satan was able to show Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world at one time. Perhaps it was through a vision of some kind. However, I do not doubt that Jesus was able to see himself as the ruler of all the nations of the earth. What a sight this would have been. On a trip to the Middle East I had the opportunity to see caskets in Egypt covered with a plate of gold. The value of the gold on each of those caskets would have been enormous. In a museum in the the city of Istanbul I saw a throne absolutely covered with jewels. The value of that one throne would have been fantastic. Perhaps you have seen pictures of the gold bars stacked in Fort Knox. Now just imagine Jesus being given the opportunity to see all of these valuables at one time. The Devil had promised him control of every treasury on earth. Every man alive would have had to ask Jesus permission before taking any action. There was only one hitch. Jesus, himself must fall down and worship before Satan.

Jesus said,

Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (Matt. 4:10).

Jesus knew the proper place of man with respect to both Satan and God. God had made this clear

long before. Man is to worship only his Creator. There are many things a man might worship. He can worship himself. He can worship sticks, stones, gold and silver idols, Satan, or even the host of the heavenly bodies such as the sun, moon and stars. But God forbids such worship. When men worship anything other than Jehovah, they make the true and living God jealous.

It is one thing to make a man or woman jealous. It is something quite different to make the Creator of heaven and earth jealous. He is capable of melting the elements with fervent heat, rolling up the heavens as a scroll, and casting his enemies into a lake of torment in which the fire is not quenched, and the worm does not die.

I don't know about you my friend, but I am very very glad that Jesus showed Satan just how foolish it is to think only about ourselves. We must follow the example of our Lord.

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

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

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

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

Mat 4:16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the

region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

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

John the baptist was near the end of his preaching concerning repentance and the coming of the kingdom of God. When he was cast into prison, it must have been a time of sorrow for our Lord. His forerunner was quieted and he was to have an even greater burden to bear himself.

Much of Jesus teaching was done near the Sea of Galilee. That is where he decided to go when he heard the news of John's imprisonment. This was in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa. 42:7). The great light which the people in the region of Galilee were to see was that of the Sun of Righteousness, or the True Light which lighteth the world. Spiritual light was beginning to shine in a region which was living in darkness.

Jesus then proceeded to preach the same message which John had been preaching. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

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

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

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

Mat 4:21 And going on from thence, he

saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

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

The Lord knew full well that he would need faithful assistants to help him in the preaching of the gospel. He immediately began to search out men who could fill that need. There would be twelve of these apostles selected within a very short time. Later Judas was to betray him and be replaced by Matthias. The word apostle means “one sent forth.” These were men whom Jesus would teach and then send them forth to teach others. They would be given special help through the Holy Spirit in accomplishing their tasks.

The first four of these apostles were fishermen. Jesus did not search out the most powerful political figures of the day. He did not select men of great wealth or education. He selected men who knew the meaning of both hard work and patience. These qualities would be extremely important in spreading the kingdom of God.

The Lord promised them that if they would leave their nets and follow him, he would make them “fishers of men.” They must have been much impressed with Christ. They willingly left their means of livelihood behind and followed him. They trust him completely. Many of the Lord’s disciples today would not have the courage to do what these four fishermen did. The four consisted of two sets

of brothers. Peter and Andrew were brothers, as were James and John.

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

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

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

The promise had been made to Abraham that through his seed all nations would be blessed. Christ was of the seed of Abraham. The rest of the Jews were also of that seed. Throughout the lifetime of Jesus, he concentrated his teaching on the Jews. The gospel would move from Jerusalem to Judea, then to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of even the world of the gentiles. We now see the beginning of those beams of spiritual light which were to illuminate the globe before the end of the world.

Luke begins his account of the book of Acts with these words.

to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

Our Lord backed up his claims of divine power and wisdom by performing miracles that no man could do unless God was with him. All manner of infirmities were healed. Both physical and spiritual weaknesses were being removed.

The people understood the results, even if they did not fully understand the spiritual aspects of that which was taking place. They followed Christ for the benefits which they could evaluate with their senses.

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Chapter 5

Mat 5:1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

Mat 5:2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mat 5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

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

Our last chapter dealt with the temptation of Christ by the Devil. Jesus had defeated Satan by quoting scripture which showed the foolishness of each of Satan's temptations. After the temptations were finished, a very interesting thing happened. Angels came and ministered to Christ. This causes me to think of a passage in Hebrews.

Hebrews 1:14. There it speaks about angels and asks a question. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation?

It seems very possible that the angels also help us to overcome our temptations, even though we do not know about it?

It was not long after the temptations, that word came to Jesus that John the baptist had been put in prison. This news filled his heart with sorrow. He then moved into the northern part of Palestine. As he came to the area of the Sea of Galilee, he called Simon, Andrew, James and John to be his disciples. They immediately left their fishing nets to become fishers of men.

Jesus then continued to preach, as John had previously done, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Notice he still did not say the Kingdom is here. He said, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Jesus began to perform many miracles of healing. Lunatics were healed. Devils were cast out. The palsied were made whole. Those with all sorts of diseases were brought to him, and he made them well. Soon his fame had reached

throughout the entire land of Palestine. Multitudes of people had gathered about him from far and near. The miracles had accomplished two purposes. Men had been healed. But, more important, they had provided a multitude who could be introduced to the coming kingdom

The Lord then went to a mountain. There he sat down and with his disciples gathered around him, he began to tell them about the type of citizens he wanted for his new kingdom. The words he spoke have become known as the “Sermon On the Mount.”

The citizens of his kingdom were to be happy, or blessed, people. Men of all time have tried to seek out the secret of happiness. Thousands of books have been printed and purchased telling men and women how to be happy. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus gives the true secret of happiness.

One must be poor in spirit. The proud will be brought down. Those who know they need help, and turn to Him will receive it from God.

One must mourn. If a person grieves over sin and its consequences in the world, he will very likely turn from it, and try to persuade others to do the same. This will result in comfort and happiness.

The true citizen of the kingdom will be meek. The meek are those who keep themselves under control. They do not force themselves upon others. The result is that they are the ones who will finally inherit all things.

One must hunger and thirst after righteousness. As the normal physical body seeks after meat and drink, the spirit of the citizen of God’s kingdom

must seek out the teachings of Jesus. He is both the bread and the water of life.

The good citizen of God's kingdom will be merciful to his fellowman. We often have others in situations where we control their lives. The person who is merciful to others may expect mercy from the Father in heaven.

Christ's ideal citizen will be pure in heart. Filthiness and dishonesty will be cast out of his mind. These things cloud the mind and keep it from seeing the glory of God. The man who sweeps out such fog, will be able to follow in the footsteps of his Saviour.

The blessed man must be a peacemaker. His king must be Christ. Christ entered the world as the "Prince of Peace." The peacemakers will be called the children of God because God is a peacemaker, and they are like him.

The citizens of God's Kingdom will be persecuted by the world. This should not discourage them. They have something the world does not have. They are citizens of the Kingdom, with all the privileges and promises of that Kingdom.

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

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

Mat 5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and

put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

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

One often senses the need for salt in food. Unsalted food is often somewhat tasteless. The Christian is expected to give the world a more pleasant taste. Those of the world have ignored the possibility that they could make the world a better and more tasty place. When the Christian fails to give flavor to his surroundings, that Christian is “good for nothing but to be cast out.”

The Christian is expected to illuminate the world in order that men might see the way of the Lord. His light is to be as a beacon on the top of a high place. How foolish it would be to light a candle and hide it where it could give off no rays. Christ’s followers are to do good works where men can observe them and give glory to God. You will notice that the good works are not to be done to bring glory to the Christian. They are to allow men to see God more clearly and glorify Him.

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

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

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

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

After Jesus had given these principles of happiness which we now call the beatitudes, he began to show how his citizens must live by a higher set of goals than those of the law of Moses. His citizens were to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. They were to show forth the spiritual light which would allow men to see the pathway of righteousness. As salt flavors food, they were to flavor mankind.

Jesus explained that he had not come to destroy the law of Moses. He had come to fulfil the law. Later, Paul told the Colossians the law of Moses had been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). When Jesus died upon the cross, he had kept the law perfectly. The law had served as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ (Gal. 3:24). Since Christ was now here, the law had been fulfilled and replaced.

What did Jesus mean? How did his teaching compare with that of the law? The law of Moses defined sin. The teachings of Christ tell us how to overcome sin. To be great in the Kingdom of Heaven men must exceed the righteousness of the

Scribes and Pharisees. If they did not, they could not even enter into Christ's Kingdom.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Under the law of Moses the principle of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” had been provided. If a man blinded another man, he was to be punished by being blinded himself. If a man stole from another, he must replace that which had been stolen, with increase. Now Jesus says, the

higher principle is to meet evil with good. Love those who abuse you. If you are asked to go one mile, go two.

The law of Moses had said, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy*. That was not to be the rule for the Christian. God causes the rain to fall upon both those who are his friends and those who disobey him. If the Christian is to be a child of his Father in heaven, he must also love those who misuse him as well as his friends.

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

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

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

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

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

Mat 5:32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause

of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Under Moses, it was commanded that men were not to kill. The citizen of the Kingdom of God must rise even higher than that. He must not even be angry with his brother without just cause. If there are bad feelings between men, they are to go to their brother and make every attempt to remove the problems. They are not to kill their brethren, or contend with them.

Under Moses it was commanded that men were not to commit adultery. Christ's subjects must go a step farther. They must not even look at a woman with lust in their heart. Jesus knew we would say, that was a hard saying. That is why he went on to say it is better to pluck out one's eye than to go to hell because an eye had been used to promote lust.

Moses because of the hardness of men's hearts had allowed them to divorce their wives. Christ said the only reason a man is justified in putting away his wife is that she has committed adultery.

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

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

Mat 5:35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the

city of the great King.

Mat 5:36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

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

Christ pointed out that in the days of old, men were bound to keep the promises they had sworn before heaven and earth to keep. He told them it should not be necessary for the Christian to swear by anything at all. The word of the Christian should be sufficient. When a promise is made, that promise must be kept. Let a Christian's aye be aye, and his nay be nay.

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

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

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

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

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

Mat 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate

thine enemy.

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

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

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

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

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

The true Christian will always be willing to follow in the footsteps of Christ. He or she will go that extra mile to encourage peace and harmony. Jesus went so far as to allow men to crucify him when he could have called ten thousand angels to protect him. His disciples should certainly try their utmost to walk in that same pathway.

The fifth chapter of Matthew closes with the words, *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* These words cause us to tremble. They call for an answer to the question, “Does God really expect men to be absolutely perfect?” If so, will every man on earth be lost in the flaming fire prepared for the Devil and his angels? Let us

think about this for a moment.

No man who ever lived, other than the Son of God Himself, has lived a perfect life. Romans 3 is crystal clear on this matter. Romans 3:10 says, *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:* Just a few verses later Paul adds, *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;* How can God command that we should live a perfect life, and then state that no man has ever done so? Does God desire that heaven be impossible to reach?

The answer is not that hard. God is a perfect God. He fashioned man after his own image. Man was created in a perfect condition. God desires that he be found perfect again. Even though God knows no man ever will live without sin, he still places that goal of purity before him. Let me ask you, “Would it be reasonable for a perfect God to command us to be anything less than perfect? Surely not.

The man Christ described in the fifth chapter of Matthew is a perfect man. He is the ideal which God sets before us. If we pause for just a moment and think about it, the citizen of God's Kingdom is the one who has the mind of Christ and walks in the footsteps of Christ.

What if we fail to live up to God's ideal? Will we be prevented from entering the Kingdom? No! Will we be cast out of the Kingdom after we have entered into it? No! At least the answer is no if we repent of our sins and ever strive to do the will of God. This is where the grace of God enters the picture. Before the blood of Christ was shed, the destiny of every man was final separation from God.

Today, this is not true. When one enters the body of Christ, which is his church, the blood of Christ cleanses that person from all sin (John 1:7).

Still, we must be very careful not to take advantage of the liberty we have in Christ. Presumptuous sin, committed knowingly is a very dangerous thing. We are not to sin that grace may abound. While the apostle Paul was speaking about the need for living a new and pure life after baptism, he said,

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein (Rom. 6:1-2)?

What a wonderful thing it is that God has so carefully spelled out what is required to live the life he desires us to live, and then mercifully provides a way for us to approach close to him again when we have stumbled!

What a wonderful thing it is that Jesus endured so much that we might have the hope of eternal life, and that He still forgives us when we foolishly go astray!

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Chapter 6

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

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

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

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

A single theme runs through the entire sixth chapter of Matthew. That theme is advice from the Lord to seek first the Kingdom of God. The chapter closes with that thought. The rest of the chapter just builds up to that truth.

With very little doubt, the words of the first verse of this chapter were spoken to people who thought of themselves as being very religious. Alms were gifts which were given for the poor. These persons were giving things which they could have kept for themselves. Why would Jesus criticize them for giving to the poor?

The root of the problem was that they were not giving these alms for the right reason. The most important reason they were giving was not

to help the poor. It was that they might be seen by others as being very religious. And then they expected others would congratulate them for their good deeds. They would have become important persons because they had given alms.

The most important reason for giving alms was not centered on one's self. It was service to others. Men who gave gifts to others in order that they might be admired for their giving, needed a change of heart before they could be good citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Paul made this clear in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians when he said, *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing (1 Cor. 13:3)*. Do you see that Paul is explaining why Jesus condemned those who gave to be seen of men. They were not giving from a heart full of love for their fellowman. They were thinking selfishly. Paul went so far as to say one could even give his own life for another, but if he did it for self glory, God would not be happy with that gift.

So Jesus told those who were giving their alms to be seen and admired by men that they must give in secret. If they would do that, God would see what they had done and would reward them for their deeds.

Mat 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen

of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

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

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

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

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

Mat 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Mat 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

Mat 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Mat 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Mat 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

Mat 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

They had another problem. Besides giving

to be seen and admired by men, they were also praying for the same reasons. They would go to the synagogues where the people gathered to worship. They would stand out in the street corners where everyone would have to see them. Then they would pray long prayers, repeating the same thoughts in different ways just to make the prayer longer.

The Lord warned them that prayers with fancy words, uttered to be heard by men, would not be heard by the Father in heaven. He said they were praying for the admiration of men, and that when they were admired by men, there was no need for God to give them any further reward.

The right thing for them to do was to pray privately, in their closets, where men could not see them. Then God would hear and answer their prayers. He gave them a model for proper praying. We sometimes call it the Lord's prayer. A better name for this prayer is the model prayer. As you read the prayer, notice that it is an unselfish prayer. It does not center upon big words and things the person praying wants.

The prayer begins by glorifying God, and desiring that his will be done. It goes on to speak of our need for God's help. It ends by praising God's power and glory. When this kind of prayer is offered, God will hear and respond.

One thing should be added. We can only pray today that God's kingdom come in the sense of spreading through all the earth. The kingdom has already come in the sense of having been established on the day of Pentecost.

Mat 6:16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they

disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Mat 6:17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

Mat 6:18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

The Lord went on to talk about fasting. It was sinful to fast in order that men might see you fasting. If that is the reason for the fasting, as soon as men have seen you, you have the reward for which you were seeking. Proper fasting was to be done humbly and quietly. The real purpose of fasting is to deprive yourself of food for a short time to remind yourself how much you depend upon the Father in heaven.

What we must not miss is the fact that in all three of these examples of Jesus, there was a common error.

1. Giving of alms
2. Praying
3. Fasting

They were all commendable religious activities, but those who were participating were concentrating upon themselves rather than on God and fellowman. None of these worshippers were seeking the Kingdom of God.

Mat 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures

upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Mat 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Mat 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The next thing mentioned in the sixth chapter of Matthew is the laying up of treasures. Jesus saw men gathering silver, gold and valuable garments. He gave them a much needed lesson. There is really no security in gathering earthly treasures. A man may possess millions of dollars worth of property and lose it all in the twinkling of an eye. Only a few heartbeats separate us from the grave. Then all we have gathered in our bank accounts and our jewelry and expensive clothes will profit us nothing.

Within the last few days John F. Kennedy, Jr. lost his life at sea when his plane crashed. The Kennedy family is very wealthy. All this wealth meant nothing after the crash.

Thieves may steal. The garments will grow old and the moths will finally destroy them. A life centered upon the possessions of this world is bound to end in sorrow. The only way life can be all it should be is for one to look beyond this life to the land of endless day. If our life here is only a preparation for life eternal, we have sought first the kingdom of God.

Mat 6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if

therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

Mat 6:23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Mat 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Next, Jesus talked about those who try to seek the Kingdom of God at the same time that they cling to the pleasures of this world. He showed that it was impossible to do that. It was like trying to work for two masters at the same time. One master would require just the opposite of the other. This would force one to make a choice between which of the masters would be served. Jesus listed the two masters. They are God and mammon. Mammon is the treasures of this world. Dear friend, Which of these masters are you serving? You cannot serve both.

Because we cannot serve mammon, we must think about heavenly things before we think about physical life. This is difficult to do. Our bodies become hungry and tired. If we do not have the proper shelter, we can freeze to death in the winter, or swelter in the heat of the summer sun. Eternal life seems distant and far away. We are tempted to place too much importance on food, clothing and shelter.

Mat 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take

no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Mat 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Mat 6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Mat 6:28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

Mat 6:29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Mat 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

The birds and the flowers are beautiful. They do not spend enormous amounts of time choosing their garments. God has provided for them. The Christian should learn a lesson from this. Closets full of clothing do not guarantee happiness. They may actually give one a headache in trying to decide which garment to choose on a given occasion.

Mat 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father

knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Mat 6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Certainly Christ was not teaching men to avoid planning ahead. What he was doing was helping us to see that food, clothing and shelter, or any other of this worlds goods, must take second place to the search for eternal life. We must have absolute confidence in the fact that God loves us, and that he will not neglect us. The birds do not spend all their time gathering food into storehouses. Yet, they have food to eat. The flowers do not worry constantly about how they are clothed. Yet, they are very beautiful.

If the grass and the flowers, which die every fall, are cared for by the Father in heaven, why should we be so anxious? A man is much more important than a lily of the field or a chirping sparrow. Even if a man were to die of starvation or freeze in the cold of the winter, there is eternal life ahead, provided that man or woman has sought first the Kingdom of Heaven. A little suffering or discomfort in this world is a small thing compared with the wonders of the heavenly city of God. So, Jesus concluded the sixth chapter of Matthew with

two wonderful verses which have brought comfort to all of his disciples.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof (Matt. 6:33-34).

They could not be more wrong. These verses are intended to help men get their value system straight. It is not best for man that he spend every day worrying about the things which might happen tomorrow or the next day.

Our society today is guilty of just what Jesus warned about. Many work sixteen hours a day when they already have large fortunes stashed away. They actually make themselves sick today while trying to protect themselves from possible disasters tomorrow. We hurry about with our loads of worry. We are easy to provoke to anger and we sometimes suffer from nervous tension and indigestion, all because we become too anxious.

What did Jesus mean when he said, *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*? He was saying that each day has enough troubles of its own without adding those of tomorrow to it. If we are going to be so concerned with troubles which may never happen, we will keep ourselves from looking forward to heaven and its glory.

The next time you are feeling tense and worried about things which might happen far down the road, it might be helpful for you to open your Bible to the

sixth chapter of Matthew and read once more about the comfort Jesus offers us.

Our lives must not be centered on the wrong goals. If we are seeking the praises of men, we will see it all end with this life. If we place our hope of security in silver, gold and the pleasures of this world, these things will flee away with our last breath.

On the other hand, if everything we think, say and do is aimed in the direction of being a good citizen of the Kingdom of God, He will reward us in heaven.

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Chapter 7

Mat 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

Mat 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Mat 7:3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Mat 7:4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

Mat 7:5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

When one reads the seventh chapter of Matthew quickly, it seems as if it contains a number of unrelated thoughts. When we dig deeper, the thoughts are found to be more closely tied together than we believed. The entire chapter deals with the evaluation and treatment of our fellowman.

Jesus first condemns judging. Now, it is not true that we are never to judge others. Jesus commanded that we judge righteous judgment. His exact words were,

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment (John 7:24).

We could not determine who should be avoided as a false teacher if all judging is to be avoided. Later in the chapter, we will see that certain kinds of judging are to be done.

What then is Jesus forbidding when he says, “*Judge not, lest ye be judged?*” There are at least two things which are involved. First, judging may mean simply recognizing the good or evil actions of another. But, it may also mean condemning another when he does not deserve to be condemned. It is right to recognize evil behavior. It is wrong to condemn another person unjustly. It is also true that any judging which is to be done must be based upon God’s standards and not our own. I have no more right to set up standards which my fellowman must live by than he has a right to set them up for me. God is the one who must set the standards.

The passage is teaching that if we are cruel and unjust in condemning others, we must expect God to be harsh with us. The man who shows no mercy to his fellowman should expect that same treatment from the Father in heaven. The book of Romans clearly tells us who the judge is to be.

Rom. 14:10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

The meaning of Jesus words is made clear by the thoughts that follow. He speaks of the one who has a beam in his own eye, and therefore cannot see clearly to cast the speck from his brother’s eye. The one he is condemning is the one who is setting his own standards and is condemning his fellowman without mercy.

Mat 7:6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before

swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Mat 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Mat 7:8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Mat 7:9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

Mat 7:10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

Mat 7:11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Mat 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

The next statement, which is found in verse six, advises us not to cast our pearls before swine. If pigs were to find valuable pearls in their food, they would not recognize that value. They would trample them into the ground. That is what men will also do when they are offered something as valuable as the Kingdom of heaven. We are not to waste precious time upon those who refuse to recognize the value of Christ and his spiritual blessings. One of the most difficult decisions in this life is deciding who needs our help and just what

kind of help we should give.

God is the best example of the way to offer blessings to others. He promises to be there for everyone who genuinely asks for good things. If we truly seek to serve God, we need not worry that he will provide for us. He suggests three actions on our part. We are to ask. We are to seek. And we are to knock. If we seek God, we will find him. If we knock for his attention, he will recognize our presence. If we ask for his aid, we will receive it. He will not ignore us, nor will he give us anything which is not good for us.

It is a strange earthly father who would deny his children food to eat, or who would give them harmful things rather than the good things they requested. God is much more perfect in his love than any earthly father. We need not fear that he will either forget us or fail us. God will provide for his children. Let us notice a statement from the book of Luke.

Luke 11:13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

It is interesting that in one of these verses it says God will give good gifts to them that ask him, and in the other it says God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. I believe we can see from these two verses that the Holy Spirit is very closely connected with the providential care

of God. The Holy Spirit must have something to do with the good gifts we receive from God. If you want to study this farther I suggest you turn over to Romans 8:26-28. There we are told the Holy Spirit makes intercession for the saints, and that all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to his purpose.

Throughout the chapter, we have been seeing that God expects us to treat our fellowman with kindness and respect. He is watching to see if we do that. There are two good reasons for paying attention to God's directions here. First, kind and just treatment is contagious. When the seeds of kindness are sown they bring forth a bountiful harvest. The world will be a better place to live because of men and women who apply the golden rule. The second reason is that God himself responds to our kindness toward others. If we show mercy and kindness to others, he will show the same to us.

Mat 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Mat 7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Mat 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Mat 7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Mat 7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth

forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

Mat 7:18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Mat 7:19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Mat 7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Jesus next warned that the majority of people will not travel the highway to heaven. It is a more difficult path and many never find it. Most will take the easy road which leads to everlasting destruction. While we are busy checking out the lives of others we must be concerned about the purity of our own life. It would be much too easy to notice the sins in others lives and then find we had also been on the road to the lake of fire.

Because there are many in the world walking the broad way, we must be careful not to follow them. This is especially true concerning any teachers among them. Jesus, therefore warned against these false teachers, or false prophets. He indicated they are often very deceiving. They look like innocent sheep. Instead, they are hungry wolves who would like to feed on the children of God.

Now the Lord shows that he did not mean we were never to look at the lives of others and determine whether they are good or evil people. In the beginning of the chapter he had said, *Judge not,*

that ye be not judged. But now he says, *Ye shall know them by their fruits.* There is a difference between evil judging and recognizing another person is bearing evil fruit. One destroys the other person. The other protects ourselves.

I once found myself in a situation where some men and women who wished to be known as Christians were living sinful lives. They were bearing evil fruit. When I called their attention to it they replied that I was judging. I answered that I was not judging, I was only recognizing evil fruit when I saw it. One of the men tried to justify himself by reminding me that there are some people who cannot tell a lemon from an orange. Although I am still convinced he was bearing the wrong kind of fruit, he did have a point. We must be very careful to use the Word of God rather than our own value system to find out whether another person's life is good or evil.

Jesus was saying, If the results of a man's teachings are evil, the man himself is evil. A good man will not teach things which bring about evil results. He added that those who bring forth evil fruit are like trees which fail to produce good fruit. They will be cut down and cast into the fire.

Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful

works?

Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Mat 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

Many of those who bring forth evil fruit will be surprised in the day of judgment. They will cry out that they have done the will of the Father when they have not done it. They will call on the name of the Lord as if they had been faithful to him. The truth is they never loved him, nor kept his commandments.

These hypocrites will have deceived many men. However, when they face the Lord in judgment, they will find they have deceived themselves into believing God can be mocked. They will claim to have done many wonderful works in the name of the Lord. The truth of it is that they either did not do the works they claimed to have done, or they did it for their own selfish reasons and not because they knew and loved God and man. God will be able to see through their lies and will say to them, *I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.*

Mat 7:25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

Mat 7:26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

Mat 7:27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Mat 7:28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

Mat 7:29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

We are drawing toward the close of the sermon on the mount. Jesus will conclude his sermon with a powerful illustration. It is a story so simple any small child can understand the point of it. Yet, it contains truth so deep the most brilliant of men are amazed by its power.

In speech classes young preachers are taught not to just end a sermon. The sermon should have a reason for being preached. It should point out action which the listener should take. There is not a better example of this than the close of the sermon on the mount.

Jesus tells of two men who built houses. One built his house upon the sand. The other built his house upon the rock. The storms came and the winds blew. The house which was built upon the sand came crashing down. The house which was built upon the rock stood firm.

It is the same with men. Those who heed and

obey the teachings of Christ are building their house upon a solid foundation. Their lives will not be shaken by the winds of false teaching, or by the temptations which beat against men's souls. But those who center their lives upon themselves and bring forth evil fruit will find their hopes dashed to pieces when they hear those horrible words, *Depart from me, I never knew you.*

When Jesus finished his sermon the multitude was amazed. They had been used to listening to the scribes and the Pharisees. These men often quoted from other authorities among men. It was not like that with the Lord. He did not need to quote from the famous doctors. He was later to say, *I have been given all authority in heaven and in earth.* Yes, Jesus spake as no other man. They had begun to find that out.

Chapter 8

Mat 8:1 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

Mat 8:2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Mat 8:3 And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Mat 8:4 And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

As Jesus concluded the sermon on the Mount, the people were astonished at his doctrine. They immediately recognized he was teaching with far greater authority than the Jewish scribes and doctors of the law. They were absolutely right. Jesus had authority to teach. He had authority to give commands, and he had authority to enforce those commands.

Jesus teaching alone would have proved him to be more than a mere man. At one time a group who came to take him by force, returned to those who had sent them without having taken Jesus. When they were asked why they had not brought him, they replied, Never a man spake like this man.

We must remember, however, that Luke begins the book of Acts by referring to the things which *Jesus began both to do and to teach (Luke 1:1)*. In chapter eight of Matthew we will examine some of the wonderful miracles which Jesus did.

~~**Mat 8:5** And when Jesus was entered into~~

Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

Mat 8:6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

Mat 8:7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

Mat 8:8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

Mat 8:9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

Mat 8:10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

Mat 8:11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 8:12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Mat 8:13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

What do we mean when we use the word miracle? It is very important that we see the true nature

and purpose of miracles. A miracle was an event which could only be brought about by the power of God. Sometimes God provides for men in subtle ways. He works behind the scenes as he cares for his children. In contrast, a miracle is deliberately performed where it can be seen by men. There is never any room for doubt that divine power was used. The miracles of Jesus were drastically different than the supposed miracles claimed by various men today. We will see in this chapter of Matthew a number of miracles which could only have been done through power greater than that of men.

Miracles drew the attention of men. It is true that many of Jesus miracles healed those who were sick, or fed those who were hungry. But if you will look a little closer, you will see that Jesus normally followed his miracles with a great truth. He would feed a multitude with bread and fish, and then present himself as the “Bread of Life.” He would raise a man from the dead and then declare that he was the “Resurrection and the Life.” It is not difficult to see that he was using the miracles as a means of gaining the attention of the multitudes.

As he came down from the mountain after preaching that wonderful sermon, great crowds began to follow him. A leper, who was convinced Jesus had amazing power, said, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. Leprosy was a terrible disease. The flesh actually rotted. Toes, fingers or even entire arms and legs fell from the rest of the body. I have heard of cases in which lepers traveled in pairs. One would be minus his legs.

Another would be minus his arms. They would work together to accomplish what one normal person might achieve.

So when Jesus was asked to make the leper clean, it was no simple thing. This was not a headache or other invisible ailing. This was something everyone would be able to see. Can you imagine a person in this condition, whose flesh suddenly becomes as clean and fresh as that of a baby. Jesus reached out and touched the man. He said, "Be thou clean." How simple! How powerful! Immediately the leprosy was gone. It did not take minutes, weeks, days or months. Immediately he was clean. Friends, that was a miracle. It is little wonder the multitudes followed the Son of God.

After this a centurian came to Jesus pleading for him to cure one of his servants who was grievously sick with the palsy. Jesus agreed to come to his house and heal the servant.

The centurian then showed a tremendous measure of confidence in the Lord. He truly understood the nature of authority. He was in command of one hundred soldiers. He told Jesus it was not necessary that he come to his home to heal the servant. All that was necessary was that he speak and the servant could be made well. He understood that Jesus had far more authority than he had.

Jesus was pleased. He made an interesting comparison. The centurian would have been a Roman. This would mean he was a Gentile rather than a Jew. Jesus went on to say many would come from various parts of the earth to sit down

with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God. Sadly, many who felt they were safe in the Kingdom would be cast into outer darkness where there would be gnashing of teeth. Jesus spoke the word and the centurian's servant was healed that same hour. Again, it did not take days or weeks. The result was immediate. And it could not be doubted.

Mat 8:14 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

Mat 8:15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.

Mat 8:16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:

Mat 8:17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

Jesus then went to the house of Peter. Peter's mother-in-law lay sick of a fever. When Jesus touched her, she not only recovered from her fever. She got up from her bed and began to serve the group.

The Roman church makes the claim that Peter was the first Pope. For centuries they have forbidden priests to marry. Yet the eighth chapter of Matthew declares Peter to have had a wife.

These were only a few of the miracles Jesus did at this time. Matthew contends these were a fulfilment of the prophecy in the fifty-third chapter

of Isaiah where it was said,

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:4-6).

Mat 8:18 Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

Mat 8:19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

Mat 8:20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

Mat 8:21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Mat 8:22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

The miracles had accomplished their purpose. Great multitudes gathered around the Lord to hear his teaching and watch for the miracles. Among these was a scribe who promised to go anywhere Jesus led. Jesus informed him this was a bit more

difficult than he might think. The foxes had holes. The birds had nests. But the Son of man did not even have a place to pillow his head. It might be necessary to give up more than the scribe realized to follow Jesus.

Another disciple was ready to follow the Lord, but he wanted just a little time before he started. He wished to go home and bury his father. Skeptics have accused Jesus of cruelty in his answer to this man. The Lord's reply was, "Follow me. and let the dead bury the dead." Christ often used shock value in his lessons. I believe this was what he was doing here. The point he was making is that service in the Kingdom of God is urgent and of first importance. Many matters which might seem important pale in significance when compared with the search for eternal life.

Mat 8:23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

Mat 8:24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

Mat 8:25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

Mat 8:26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

Mat 8:27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

Jesus and His disciples entered into a ship. A tempest arose while they were in the midst of the sea. The waves were beating over the ship and about to capsize it. The disciples found Jesus asleep and begged Him to save them. They felt they were about to drown in the sea. Jesus accused them of having a lack of faith. He commanded the wind to cease. Immediately the storm calmed and all were safe.

The miracles of Jesus fell into several main classes. Some dealt with His mastery over sickness. Others dealt with His authority over the spirit world. In this case His mastery over nature was shown. This was the Son of the living God.

Mat 8:28 And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

Mat 8:29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

Mat 8:30 And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.

Mat 8:31 So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

Mat 8:32 And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into

the sea, and perished in the waters.

Mat 8:33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

Mat 8:34 And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

When the ship reached the shore of the Sea of Galilee, it landed in the country of the Gergesenes. Palestine was west of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus and his disciples had crossed to the east side of the Sea. There they found two men who were possessed by devils. The afflicted men stayed in the tombs of the dead and came out to threaten those who passed by. When they saw Christ, they asked if he had come there to torment them before the time.

There are two interesting things about this. First, we notice from the teaching of the Bible that it was possible for more than one spirit to live in a single body. The spirit of the devils was living in the same body as that of the men from whom they had seized control. Whether or not such a thing can take place today, the Bible teaches it did take place in the time of the Lord.

The second matter of interest is the understanding by the devils that a time was coming in which Jesus would cast them into torment. They knew full well that a time of judgment was ahead and that they were destined for punishment.

A herd of pigs was feeding nearby. The devils

asked to be allowed to enter the swine when they were removed from the two men. Jesus allowed it and the devils took over the bodies of the pigs, causing them to rush into the sea and drown.

One of the most vicious attacks I have seen against the Bible dealt with this event. Thomas Huxley became famous in the time of Charles Darwin. He promoted Darwin's theory of evolution as energetically as he could. On one occasion he wrote an essay about Jesus having been cruel to the swine herders. The point was that Jesus had caused their pigs to drown and they were left with no livelihood.

Huxley was wrong on at least two counts. These men were almost certainly Jews. The Old Testament forbid the eating of pigs. They were listed as unclean animals. The men should not have been raising them at that time. Secondly, it was not Jesus who caused the pigs to run into the sea and drown. It was the evil spirits. Jesus only allowed it.

The men quickly went into the nearby city and told the citizens what had happened to them, and also what had happened to the two men who had been possessed by the devils. Soon the entire city came out to meet Jesus.

One would have expected the people to be overjoyed at the sight of the two healthy men who had previously suffered from such horrible conditions. With the change in the behavior of the two men, the safety of the people passing by in that area would also have been much improved. Today, we are willing to sacrifice animals to insure the well being of men. Sometimes the animals are

used for medical research. Other times it is simply a matter of having to kill the animal to provide food for humans. A human life is considered far more important than that of any animal.

Yet the citizens of the city begged Jesus to leave their area. It is easy to see that they were more concerned about the money which would be gained by the sale of the pigs than they were about the welfare of the two men who were released from the clutches of the evil spirits. Let us keep our values straight.

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Chapter 9

Mat 9:1 And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

Mat 9:2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

Mat 9:3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

Mat 9:4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

Mat 9:5 For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?

Mat 9:6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

Mat 9:7 And he arose, and departed to his house.

Mat 9:8 But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

In the eighth chapter of Matthew, we found Jesus beginning to perform miracles. We observe that these miracles were not just for the purpose of feeding men's hungry stomachs and causing the diseased to become physically whole. Jesus was aiming higher. He wished to help men see the need for spiritual

food and health. The miracles did relieve men of serious physical problems. However, they attracted great multitudes to whom the Lord could then teach the lessons of the Kingdom of Heaven.

We are going to see several more of Jesus miracles in this ninth chapter. But along with them, we will see the beginnings of his long conflict with the Pharisees.

After he relieved the two men of the Gergesenes from their demon possession, Jesus entered a ship and went back across the Sea of Galilee to his own city. Since the village of Nazareth was almost directly across the sea from where he had been, and since Jesus spent his boyhood in Nazareth, his own city must have been Nazareth.

A man with the palsy was brought to him. Jesus took delight in the faith they had shown and said to the man, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee*. Immediately, the scribes began to question his authority to make such a statement. They knew very well the forgiveness of sins was God's right, not man's. To them, this meant Jesus was saying he was God. As far as they were concerned, that was blasphemy. Blasphemy is the act of speaking lightly of that which is important. If Jesus had not been the Son of God, his statement would have been blasphemy. Since he was the Son of God, He was innocent of the charge.

A pattern is beginning to develop. When Jesus finished the sermon on the mount, the people recognized that he taught with more authority than the scribes and Pharisees. Now, we find the Pharisees denying his right to forgive sins. These conflicts

will finally lead to Jesus crucifixion. It is obvious that the hatred of the scribes and Pharisees was a result of jealousy over the popularity of Christ. The hatred of the scribes and Pharisees became ever deeper as time passed by.

Jesus knew what they were thinking, even though they had not spoken out loud. He boldly claimed the power to forgive sins. As proof of that power, he told the man with the palsy to arise and walk. The man arose and went to his home.

Mat 9:9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

Jesus saw Matthew, who was receiving taxes, and called him to follow him. This brought on even more discussion. The tax collectors were noted for gouging the common people. After they had collected what the Roman government assessed, the tax collectors often took more and kept it for themselves. They were hated men. Matthew followed Jesus. Not only that, a number of other publicans, or tax collectors, gathered around Jesus, and he ate with them.

Mat 9:10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

Mat 9:11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your

Master with publicans and sinners?

Mat 9:12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

Mat 9:13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Now the Pharisees were enraged. Jesus claimed to be a particularly holy person. He was attempting to teach righteousness. How did he think he could do that and keep company with publicans and sinners?

Jesus answer was that those who are well do not need a doctor. He had come to show mercy to sinners and call them, to repentance. He was not sharing in any evil they did. He was a physician, attempting to heal their souls. The lesson is a good one for us. We may associate with sinners. But that association must always be for the purpose of lifting them to holy lives, and not that we might share in their evil ways.

Mat 9:14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

Mat 9:15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

Mat 9:16 No man putteth a piece of new

cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

Mat 9:17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

Some of John the baptist's disciples came to Jesus. They had noticed Jesus' disciples were not fasting. This seemed strange to them. They had been taught to fast. The Pharisees fasted. In fact, the Pharisees fasting was impossible to ignore. They made a special attempt to appear to fast in order that men might see their pious nature. Jesus had said they had their reward when they were seen of men. But, why did Jesus not insist that his disciples fast?

Jesus gave a beautiful answer to their question. Fasting is the natural outcome of self denial. It is often connected with sadness. There would come a time when Jesus disciples would have occasion to fast. He would be taken from them and their hearts would be filled with sorrow. At the time this question was asked, Jesus disciples were extremely happy. It was as though Jesus was the bridegroom at a wedding, and everyone was happy and enjoying union with him.

The Lord went on to say one does not put new wine into old wineskins. The old wineskins are fragile and will burst. The new wine will be spilled and be lost. Jesus point was that he was introducing a new and different age. The information taught by the scribes and the Pharisees would be replaced by

the truths spoken by the Son of God. Many things would change.

Notice that Jesus had absolutely no fear of the power of the hypocritical religious leaders of the Jews. He was not arrogant. He simply knew they were wrong in their life and teaching. He did not hesitate to tell them so. This was not egotism. This was genuine love.

Mat 9:18 While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

Mat 9:19 And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.

A ruler whose daughter had died approached the Saviour. He did not say, My daughter is sick. He said, She is even now dead. Up to this time, Matthew has not recorded Jesus as having raised anyone from the dead. The ruler is so completely convinced of the power of the Master that he says, *Come, lay thy hand upon her and she shall live.* Jesus started to follow the man to care for his daughter.

Mat 9:20 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment:

Mat 9:21 For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

Mat 9:22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

While he was still on the way, a woman who was hemorrhaging came and touched his clothing. She felt that just touching his garment would be sufficient to heal her. Jesus knew she had touched him. He turned and said, *Daughter, be of good comfort. Thy faith hath made thee whole.* The woman was healed immediately.

We must notice the connection between faith and healing. This is the second time in Matthew that Christ spoke of the importance of faith in healing. Some would have us believe this means faith alone will heal. In both of these cases recorded by Matthew, the faith was accompanied by action on the part of the one healed. If Jesus is to heal the souls of men today, faith will be important to the healing, but that faith will have to come alive through action. This is what the Bible calls the “obedience of faith.” The book of Romans begins and ends with these words.

Rom 1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

Rom 16:26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

After the woman with the issue of blood was

healed, Jesus arrived at the place where the ruler's dead daughter was being mourned. The people were weeping and grieving over her death. All seemed hopeless.

Mat 9:23 And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

Mat 9:24 He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

Mat 9:25 But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

Mat 9:26 And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

Jesus walked into their midst and made a shocking statement. *Give place. The maid is not dead but sleepeth.* They laughed him to scorn. There was not a doubt in anyone's mind but what the maiden was dead. Certain liberal critics of the supernatural and miraculous in the Bible will seize at almost any straw to remove these things from the divine record. When they read of such things as this, they like to say the person only fainted, or was in a coma. They would point out here that Jesus denied the girl was dead. She was really still alive, but unconscious. Such an attitude is dishonest. This is not the only place Jesus talked about death as sleep. He said the same of Lazarus when he had been dead for several days and whose body was already stinking. Then Jesus took the

maid by the hand and she arose.

How much power does the Son of God possess? Enough to prove death is not final. He possesses the keys to death, hell and the grave. Satan would love to pay us the wages of sin, which is death. Christ is able to pay that debt himself and bring us to eternal life.

Mat 9:27 And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us.

Mat 9:28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

Mat 9:29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

Mat 9:30 And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.

Mat 9:31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

Two blind men came to Jesus, crying for him to have mercy upon them and help them to see. Jesus asked if they truly believed he was able to do this. When they answered, Yes, he touched their eyes and they were able to see. Then he gave them a strange command. They were not to let anyone know of their healing.

Does this contradict what we have said about the purpose of Jesus miracles being partially to attract multitudes in order that he might teach them? I do not think it does. There are two possible explanations.

One is that the multitude was growing faster than Jesus desired. Vast crowds could actually be a hindrance rather than an advantage, particularly if they became unruly and tried to compete for his attention. Jesus may have been pacing his work by giving such a command.

A second possibility is that Jesus knew psychology. Men and women often do just the opposite of what they are told to do. Jesus may have known the men would do just what he told them not to do. Personally, I do not like this explanation very well. It has a ring of deception about it. I do not think Jesus ever lowered himself to deceit in any form.

Mat 9:32 As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

Mat 9:33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

Mat 9:34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

Mat 9:35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Jesus then cast a devil out of a dumb man. The man spoke. The multitudes marvelled. But the Pharisees accused him of casting the devil out through the power of Satan. This accusation was blasphemy. Jesus had cast out the devils through the

power of the Holy Spirit. The denial of the power of the Spirit of God is speaking evil of that which is good. It is blasphemy. We say men blaspheme when they use the name of God or Christ in a fit of temper. Such speech is also correctly called blasphemy.

Mat 9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Mat 9:37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

Mat 9:38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

The Lord moved from village to village, preaching about the coming kingdom of heaven. He went into the synagogues of the Jews and preached to them. He healed all kinds of sicknesses and diseases. His heart was touched with the problems of the multitudes. He knew, even better than they, the horrible nature of the consequences of sin.

They seemed to him as sheep who have been scattered over the countryside, having no shepherd. This picture is very similar to one given by Micaiah in 1 Kings.

1 Kings 22:17 And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no

master.

Long after King David lived, Ezekiel prophesied,

And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it (Ezek. 34:23-24).

Jesus Christ was of the seed of David.

The chapter closes with Jesus telling His disciples the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few. They must pray that God will send laborers to reap the harvest. The harvest being the souls of men.

Chapter 10

Mat 10:1 And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

Mat 10:2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

Mat 10:3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;

Mat 10:4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

The beginning of this chapter tells us of Jesus calling the twelve together and giving them special powers to heal all manner of diseases, and to cast out unclean spirits. It is important for us to realize that the apostles did have some miraculous power before the day of Pentecost. I think sometimes we get the idea they received all of their power at the time the Holy Spirit was poured out on that day and they began to speak in tongues. That is not the case.

The twelve are listed. They are Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus and Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Mat 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

Mat 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Mat 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mat 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

Mat 10:9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,

Mat 10:10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

Mat 10:11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.

Mat 10:12 And when ye come into an house, salute it.

Mat 10:13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

Jesus gave careful instructions as to whom they were to preach. They were not to go to either the Gentiles or the Samaritans, but only to the Jews. For some reason, known best to God himself, it was important that the Jews receive the first chance to hear of the Kingdom of Heaven. God had worked through the Jews from the time of Abraham. He now gave them every opportunity to prepare for

entering into the coming Kingdom. Not only was this true during the life of Jesus. It was also true in the preaching of Paul. Paul nearly always went to the synagogue of the Jews first, as he entered each new city. The Jewish people have no excuse for rejecting Christ. They had the prophecies, and they had the first chance to hear of their fulfilment.

Jesus told his apostles not to take any more than the barest necessities as they preached. They were not to have gold or silver in their purse, nor were they to have more than one coat to wear. He indicated the workman is worthy of his hire. I understand this to mean that there would be enough gratitude from the listeners that they would provide for the needs of the apostles. The apostles would provide for the spiritual needs of the people. In turn, the people would provide for the material and physical needs of the apostles.

When they came to a town, they were to introduce themselves and indicate their mission. If the people received them with open hearts, they were to pray that peace would come to that house. If the people rejected them, they were to move to the next house, or the next city, and shake the dust off their feet. Christians are not to cast their pearls before swine. Time and energy are too valuable to be wasted.

Mat 10:14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

Mat 10:15 Verily I say unto you, It shall

be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Mat 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Mat 10:17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

Mat 10:18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

Mat 10:19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

Mat 10:20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

Mat 10:21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

Mat 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Mat 10:23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

Mat 10:24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

Mat 10:25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

There is a problem here, however. Jesus, and perhaps the apostles also, had the ability to know the hearts of men better than we do. Just how long do we continue to teach a person before it is evident that we are wasting our time on them? Surely, we must be careful that we do not give up on someone too early. It is better to spend too much time with a prospect than too little. Only when we are very confident that our time is better spent in other ways, can we justify giving up on one whom we have been trying to gain for Christ. When a man truly turns down the offer of the Lord, he is in a serious condition. Jesus said it would be better for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than it would be for those who rejected the teaching of the apostles.

The Lord then went on to present a very dreary picture. He was sending his apostles out like sheep into a den of wolves. Because of this, they must be both wise and gentle.

They would be arrested and beaten. They would be brought before kings and governors. But they were not to worry about what they would say in such cases. God would provide them with the content and the manner of speech they would use. They would have the assistance of the Holy Spirit as they defended themselves and testified of the

Son of God.

There would be serious division among those who heard their message. Some would listen. Others would not. Brothers and sisters would take opposite sides. Children would even cause their own parents to be killed because of their acceptance of the truth. This has been true through over nineteen centuries. Preachers have been spat upon and beaten. Children have been disowned for being baptized into Christ. But, as Jesus told his apostles. Those who endure to the end will be saved. Revelation 2:10 agrees.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.

The Lord said it should be no surprise that his apostles would be hated. Many of the religious leaders among the Jews had hated him with a fiery passion. It was to be expected that they would treat his followers in a similar manner. They had even accused the Master of casting out devils through the power of Satan. They would do similar things to his disciples.

Mat 10:26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

Mat 10:27 What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.

Mat 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

These dangers were not to keep them from preaching. They were to take those things which Jesus had taught them privately and were to shout them out from the housetops. If they were killed for their efforts, they were to remember that only the body could be killed by such murderers. The real question was whether to fear God or man. Man could only kill the body. God could cast both body and soul into hell.

Mat 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

Mat 10:30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Mat 10:31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Mat 10:32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

Mat 10:33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Mat 10:34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Mat 10:35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

Mat 10:36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

Mat 10:37 He that loveth father or mother

more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Mat 10:38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

And they need not fear that God would forget them. He is aware of every sparrow that falls. He knows the condition of every hair of one's head. They were far more valuable than sparrows. We need to take this advice to heart today. God has not forgotten us. He told the apostles later that he would be with them to the end of the world. The same promise is there for every true Christian in our time. He has promised to care for his own. If a man denies Christ, Christ will deny him. If a man confesses Christ, The Lord will confess him before the Father in heaven. Surely, this principle applies in the present, just as it will be in the day of final judgment.

As the chapter draws toward its close, it seems that Jesus felt the need to repeat his concerns over the welfare of his friends. He returned to the idea that the preaching of the truth would divide men. A man and his father would take issue over the gospel. A daughter and her mother would do the same. A person who accepted the message of the Kingdom would find he had firece enemies among even those who were of his own family.

Mat 10:39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Mat 10:40 He that receiveth you receiveth

me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

Mat 10:41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

Mat 10:42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

This must not stop them. Anyone who felt his kinfolk to be more important than the Lamb of God would be making a terrible mistake. Christ must take first place in the heart. Neither mother, father, son or daughter should ever come between Christ and his disciples.

Perhaps the main idea of the tenth chapter of Matthew is the cost of following Jesus Christ. In the first part of the chapter, Jesus is telling his apostles what they must give up to preach his message to the Jews. In the later parts of the chapter, he explained what it will cost some to hear and obey.

If a man will follow Christ, he must be prepared to bear a cross. Jesus bore his cross and he expects us to bear ours. It appears that some must bear a heavier cross than others.

At one time I thought I had given up a great deal to go to college. I had sold my 1941 Buick Special to get the money to pay my first semester's

tuition. It deepened my grief when I heard a father talking with his son on the steps of the dormitory. He explained to his son that \$500 had been deposited in the bank for his use. He then told him if the \$500 dollars ran low, the son was to contact him for a further deposit. Now that was hard to take! I had not the faintest idea how I was going to pay for the next semester's tuition, to say nothing of \$500 of spending money.

Later that year, I found I was a very fortunate man. I made good friends with another young freshman. This lad had just become a Christian. When he announced to his parents that he had become a member of the body of Christ, his belongings were packed up and set out on the porch. He was told not to ever enter again into his parents home. His cross was much heavier than my own. In those difficult days, we sometimes studied together in the college library. Each of us drew strength from the other. Both of us finally graduated. God had provided for us then, and he continues to do so until this day.

It is well for us to remember the general plan of Christ's life. He left the glory of heaven itself to sacrifice himself for wicked men. He went about healing men from their diseases and teaching the way home to the Father, for those who would hear. It did not take long for those who were filled with pride and selfishness to attack him. He had to fight against the principalities and powers of Satan and his angels. Men accused him of blasphemy, of treason, and of breaking the very laws he had come to fulfil. He was beaten, and murdered. They

even cast lots for his clothing at the foot of the cross where they had nailed him.

But he arose! First, he arose from the grave and appeared to his followers. Then he was taken up to be returned to the glory from which he had come. There he sits today, reigning at the right hand of the Father.

But, first came the cross, and only then did he wear the crown. Jesus said,

He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.

When we are willing to put everything else second to the King and his kingdom, we will have discovered the secret of life. As long as any other thing stands between us and the Lord, our life will flicker and be in danger of being put out.

Christ closed his instructions to the apostles in the limited commission by saying the ones who received the apostles were actually receiving Christ himself. The apostles were his prophets. When the listeners gladly received the truth, they would receive a prophet's reward. What did Jesus mean by "a prophet's reward?" I think he simply meant the person who gave heed to the truth would find himself ultimately enjoying the same happiness in heaven that those who taught him were to enjoy.

The Lord's last words in this chapter were that one who provided a cup of cold water to one of Christ's followers in his name would be certain to receive a reward from heaven. There is a tremendous lesson here. Let us hear the teachings of those who

proclaim the Way, the Truth and the Life. Also let us encourage those who follow him.

Chapter 11

Mat 11:1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

Mat 11:2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

Mat 11:3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

Mat 11:4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

Mat 11:5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Mat 11:6 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

After a time, John the baptist sent two of his own disciples to talk to the Lord. Remember that we were told back in the fourth chapter of Matthew that John had been put into prison. Apparently John did not lose touch with what was happening among those who had heard the preaching of the coming kingdom. He knew where to send his disciples to make contact with Jesus.

John gave his disciples a message to the Lord. It seems a strange message for this great man to send. He wished to know whether Jesus was truly the one they had been waiting for. Should he and his disciples continue to glorify Christ, or should

they wait for someone else?

I think John was like many of us. Too often we desire to rush God's plans. We think our prayers should be answered immediately. God knows far better than we do just how fast he needs to move. Probably John felt the Kingdom should have been installed by the time he was sending his messengers. Why should he be held in a prison cell when the King of kings had been introduced? John would not have known of the many preparations which must be made before Christ would actually be raised to reign on David's throne at the right hand of God.

We can almost feel the pain in Jesus heart as he sent his reply back to John. They were to tell him about the blind being made to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear. They were to tell John of the lepers being made clean, and the dead being returned to life.

Then Jesus gave John the strongest encouragement which he could give at that time. He said, *Blessed is he whosoever is not offended in me (Matt. 11:6)*. Jesus was telling John not to give up. The word offended is not used in quite the same way we would use that word today. We use it to mean that the offended person has been hurt deeply by someone else. In the New Testament, it often means one has been caused to give up confidence in another person. Jesus told John not to lose confidence that he was the Only Begotten Son of God. You see, this was the same John who had baptized the Lord and had seen the Holy Spirit alight on Jesus as a dove, and who had heard the Father speak from heaven. All John needed was a

reminder and he would be able to continue faithful unto death.

Mat 11:7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

Mat 11:8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

Mat 11:9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

Mat 11:10 For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Mat 11:11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

This caused Jesus to give John one of the finest compliments he ever gave to any person. He wanted to make certain the question John had sent to him did not cause his own disciples to think John was weak and short of faith. Some of them had seen and heard John preaching in the wilderness. Did they think they were listening to a man who could not make up his mind about things? Was he like a reed which the wind blows first one way and then the other? Had they seen a man wearing the finest of

linen clothing which would mean he could not take the trials of life because he had been pampered?

Or, on the other hand, had they heard a true prophet of God there in the wilderness? Jesus assured them John was truly a prophet of God. But, Jesus went even farther. He said that John was not just any prophet. He had been given the very special task of going before Jesus to prepare the way for the King. This was an honor of the highest kind. John was to be considered a great man. In fact, there had not been a man live up to that time who was greater than John. Remember my friends, that included such people as Abraham, Noah, Moses, Job and Samuel.

The next thing Jesus said causes us to wonder. Jesus said the one who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John. Is it really true that the one talent man within the Kingdom is of greater value than this giant of faith who lived on wild honey and locusts and dressed in camel hair? How could such a thing be?

Perhaps the answer is that none of the heroes of faith in the past had been baptized into Christ, and therefore had to wait for the cleansing power of the blood of Christ to become available through the death on the cross. Only when cleansed through the blood of the crucified Saviour could they become righteous.

Mat 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by

force.

Mat 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

Mat 11:14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

Mat 11:15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Mat 11:16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

Mat 11:17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

Mat 11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

Mat 11:19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

Christ went on to say the Kingdom of Heaven had suffered much violence because men wished to take it by force. I believe this is Jesus way of saying men misunderstand the way in which the Kingdom of Heaven will gain its victory over the world. John should not expect to see Jesus gather an army of soldiers and conquer the Roman empire by force. The Kingdom of Heaven conquers men's hearts by teaching, not by steel swords or nuclear weapons.

Another possibility is that Jesus is saying, "There are those who would like to enter the

Kingdom of Heaven through their own gate and in their own time, ignoring God's own timetable and His instructions for entering through the door God provided, which was His Son.

Jesus indicated the people were never satisfied. They were unhappy with John because he came fasting and living a life of hardship. Then when Jesus came, eating food and drinking wine, they accused him of gluttony and drunkenness. They should have been listening to both John and Jesus. Instead, many of them failed to listen to either one of them.

Mat 11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

Mat 11:21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Mat 11:22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

Mat 11:23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Mat 11:24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

He went on then to give illustrations of just

how foolish the people of Israel had been. Many of Jesus miracles had been done near the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Bethsaida and Chorazin were cities near Capernaum where Jesus had spent much time. They had had every opportunity to hear and obey the commands of the Lord. But, they had not listened. Therefore, they would have to face the wrath of God in the day of judgment. They were in worse condition than Tyre and Sidon whom God had destroyed. They were in worse condition than Sodom where God rained down fire and brimstone from heaven and burned the city in the days of Lot.

People in the United States have been exposed to the pure teaching of Jesus Christ and his apostles for many many years. Bibles are available by the millions. Yet, one can drive along the highway on a Lord's day morning and observe dozens of boats on trailers, headed for the fishing sites. We also can see many out mowing their yards rather than meeting to praise the God of Heaven. And all this is in spite of the fact that the Bible teaches us in Hebrews not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

Heb 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

God will not rain fire and brimstone down upon us today as he did on Sodom. However, his books are in order. The book of Revelation assures us that,

I know thy works. That same book tells us, Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen (Rev. 1:7).

It will not be those like John the baptist who will be wailing. It will be those like Chorazin, like Bethsaida, and like those in the Bible belt of the U.S.A., who have turned a deaf ear. My friend, be sure that you are not found among those who weep.

When Jesus said it would be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment that it would be for Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum, does this mean some suffer more severely than others in hell? I am not certain exactly what Jesus means by this statement. But one thing I do know. I would not want to be in a condition less tolerable than Sodom when the sheep are separated from the goats for all eternity.

Mat 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Mat 11:26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Mat 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the

Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

Mat 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Mat 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Mat 11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Jesus went on to teach His listeners about the danger of letting human wisdom come between them and the truth. Very often those who are praised by men for their great wisdom, such as the scribes and Pharisees, have blinded their eyes and stopped their ears to the wisdom which comes from above through the Saviour of the world.

In contrast to this, those who know they are not able to direct their own steps humble themselves as little children and cling to the hand of the man of Galilee. Jesus thanked his Father that there were humble persons who would hear and keep his words.

But how had God hidden these truths from the wise and prudent of this world? I suppose it was in much the same way as he hardened Pharaoh's heart when Moses asked him to let the people leave the land of Egypt. When God speaks some men immediately stiffen their necks, and harden their hearts. In that sense, God has hidden the truth from them.

Jesus can be rough and Jesus can be gentle. He had been rough in his words to the scoffers. Now he speaks some of the sweetest and gentlest

words ever heard.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Jesus does not mean to say it costs little to be a Christian. There is a cross to bear. There is a yoke to take upon ourselves. The point is that when compared with the burden of guilt and condemnation which lies upon the souls of those who will not listen, the sacrifices required of the Christian are light. Friend, if your burden is too much to bear outside Christ, believe his word, obey his gospel, and trade your impossible load for one which Christ will help to carry.

Chapter 12

Mat 12:1 At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat.

Mat 12:2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

Mat 12:3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;

Mat 12:4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

Mat 12:5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

Mat 12:6 But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.

Mat 12:7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

Mat 12:8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

The twelfth chapter of Matthew pictures the terrifying danger of rejecting the efforts of God to save men from their sins. By this time in his ministry, Jesus had taught the sermon on the

mount. The teaching was so much superior to that of the scribes and lawyers among the Jews, that multitudes had followed him. By his miracles, he had also demonstrated his authority over both the natural world and the spirit world. All men should have been drawn to him to hear and be healed. The fact is that the Jewish leaders were so jealous of him, they were seeking ways to quiet him and limit his popularity. This chapter tells of new conflict between Christ and those enemies of the truth.

Jesus and his disciples were traveling through an area where corn was growing. The disciples became hungry and began to pick some of the ears and eat them. The Pharisees saw this taking place and decided they had the chance to attack the Lord. They asked him to explain why his disciples were breaking the Sabbath laws. There was nothing more sacred to the Jews than the Sabbath. If they could find Jesus guilty of breaking the Sabbath, he would have been discredited in the eyes of many of the people.

Jesus answered clearly and boldly. The disciples were hungry. It was not wrong for them to pluck enough to eat on that day. He went to their scriptures to prove it. I Samuel 21-1-6 informs us David went into the temple and ate the shewbread which was there for the priests.

1Sa 21:1 Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?

1Sa 21:2 And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business,

and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place.

1Sa 21:3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present.

1Sa 21:4 And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.

1Sa 21:5 And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel.

1Sa 21:6 So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.

He and his men were not punished. They were excused because they were truly hungry. Christ also pointed out that the priests worked on the Sabbath day in their assigned duties.

Then Jesus made a statement which set the Pharisees on fire. He told them there was one present who was greater than the temple, and that the Son of man is the Lord of the Sabbath. To the Pharisees, this was pure blasphemy. Only God was greater than the temple and Lord of the Sabbath.

Jesus was claiming to be God.

The Lord went on to say they had misunderstood the character of God. God placed mercy before sacrifice. The point was, the Pharisees were so interested in accusing him and his disciples of breaking the Sabbath, they had forgotten the Sabbath was begun to aid man, not to punish him. God's laws were given to assist men. One can become so wrapped up in the details of the law that he causes the law to become an enemy rather than a friend.

Mat 12:9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:

Mat 12:10 And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.

Mat 12:11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

Mat 12:12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

Mat 12:13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

Besides, since Jesus was God with us, he was involved in the institution of the Sabbath. The one who created the Sabbath had the right to use it as he saw fit. It was not a sin for his disciples to

pluck and eat the ears of corn.

Jesus then entered into the synagogue. This did not end the discussion of the Sabbath. It only continued it in another place. The heat of the Pharisees anger was to rise to another level.

As he entered the synagogue, Jesus saw a man with a withered hand. The Jews knew he had seen the man. They asked what they thought was a difficult question. Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? They were not asking him for information. They were asking in order to trap him and accuse him.

Jesus replied that if a man had a sheep which fell into a pit on the Sabbath, he would pull it out of the pit. Which was more important; to help a sheep or a man? To ask the question was to answer it. Of course, it was lawful to help a man on the Sabbath by healing him. After he had given the Pharisees their answer, he called for the man to stretch forth his hand. Jesus then healed it.

As a result of this conflict, the Pharisees assembled in a council to make plans for Jesus death. They did not put their plans into action until later when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. But it is at this point that they began to plot his murder.

The Lord then withdrew himself from the Pharisees. The multitudes followed him. Then the Bible makes the simple statement. He healed them all. He was making it absolutely impossible to ignore his power and his concern for men. The enemies might despise him. They might plot to kill him. But one thing is certain. They could not

ignore him. There were entirely too many who had relatives and friends who had been suffering and had been made whole.

Again he charged them not to spread the news of their cures. We have talked about this before. There is no way of knowing exactly why he gave such instructions. We must accept it as part of his divine wisdom. We can be sure there was a good reason.

Mat 12:14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

Mat 12:15 But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;

Mat 12:16 And charged them that they should not make him known:

Mat 12:17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

Mat 12:18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.

Mat 12:19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

Mat 12:20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.

Mat 12:21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

Jesus then explained that the things which were happening were in fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah. In this prophecy, which is found in Isaiah 42:1-4, the emphasis is on the Gentiles being invited to hear the law of God. The Jews were to hear it first. Then, when they rejected it, God would turn to the Gentiles. That is just what is happening. The Pharisees were rejecting God's offer and claiming Jesus was a servant of Satan. The result would finally be that God will not cast his pearls before them. He would send his truths to the Gentiles. Could it be that Jesus command not to make him known was the beginning of this change? Isaiah says God's servant will not rage through the streets with a loud voice. He will not burn up the bruised reeds until the judgment. The Pharisees are the bruised reeds.

Mat 12:22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

Mat 12:23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

Mat 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

Mat 12:25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

Mat 12:26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his

kingdom stand?

Mat 12:27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.

Mat 12:28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

Mat 12:29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

Mat 12:30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Mat 12:31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

Mat 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

A man who was both blind and unable to speak was brought to Jesus. He healed him, causing him to both see and speak. When the multitudes saw the miracle, they cried out in praise, *Is this not the son of David?* The Jews looked forward to the coming of a descendant of David who was to be the Messiah. The crowd was convinced Jesus must be that promised man. No one but the Messiah would be able to do the things Jesus had been doing. He

must be doing it through the power of the God of heaven.

The Pharisees disagreed. Their explanation was just the opposite of the multitude. They could not deny the miracles had taken place. The only thing they could do was claim Jesus was doing these things by the power of Satan himself.

Jesus knew what they were thinking. His reply shows the other side of Jesus from that which men normally admire. Once, when John was told to behold the Lion of Judah, he turned and saw the Lamb of God (Rev. 5:4-6). The Son of God sometimes is as gentle as a Lamb. Other times he is as fierce as a lion. He was ready at that point to show the fierce and lionlike side of his nature.

He explained that if he had driven out the evil from the man through the power of Satan, then Satan had been fighting against himself. He would not last long if he were to do that. What is more, Jesus turned the question on them. Apparently some of the Pharisees had been falsely claiming to cast out evil spirits. Jesus asked them what the source of their power was. The Pharisees were the ones who were lying and deceiving men.

Instead of doing his miracles through the power of the Devil, Jesus had done them through the power of the Holy Spirit. Since that was true, they should have believed him when he said the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. Anyone who fought against his claims was scattering abroad that which God was trying to put together.

Then Jesus explained what a terrible position the Pharisees had gotten themselves into. They had spoken against the Holy Spirit and blasphemed him

by calling him Satan. See verses 31-32 above.

Mat 12:33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.

Mat 12:34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Mat 12:35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

Mat 12:36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

Mat 12:37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

To speak against Jesus Christ as a son of man would be bad enough. But to speak against the Holy Spirit through which he was able to work his miracles was deadly. If one rejects the Spirit of God through which the truth becomes evident in this world, he has rejected his hope of salvation. This will not be forgiven him either now or later because he has turned down God's own means of rescuing him. John speaks about a sin which is unto death and says one is not to pray for the man who commits the sin unto death. But, he also says if we confess our sins God is willing to forgive us

our sins. My friends, be careful to have the proper respect for God and for his children. Do not be found calling good evil. Confess your sins and encourage every good work. Then you need not worry about the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Jesus urged them to get their hearts right. They were a generation of vipers who were so evil they could say nothing good.

By this time the Pharisees were livid with anger. They demanded that Jesus provide evidence that he had the authority to speak as he was doing. He was to provide them a sign of that authority. Jesus did not need to provide a sign. He had already offered them proof after proof in the miracles which he did. They were not after a sign. They only wished to trap and defeat him.

Mat 12:38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

Mat 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

Mat 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Mat 12:41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater

than Jonas is here.

Mat 12:42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

Mat 12:43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

Mat 12:44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

Mat 12:45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Christ indicated that they would not be given the kind of sign they were demanding. But a sign would come. It would be the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah had been in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so would the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. When Jonah was spit up after the time in the depths, he became a type representing the resurrection of Jesus. Later on, Jesus disciples would remember these words. After Jonah had risen from the depths of the sea, Ninevah repented at his preaching. The Jews continued to reject the Word of God even after he rose from the dead.

Jesus then explained the difficulty of cleaning the Jewish house. Every time an unclean spirit was cast out, seven more came to take its place. They seemed to be in worse condition after he preached to them than before.

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

Mat 12:47 Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

Mat 12:48 But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

Mat 12:49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

Mat 12:50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Some then came, telling him his mother and brethren desired to speak to him. The Lord replied that his kinsfolk were those who did the will of God. Being of the seed of Abraham was not as important as loving the Father and keeping his commandments. According to Solomon and also the Christ, this is the greatest of all commandments.

Chapter 13

Mat 13:1 The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.

Mat 13:2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

Mat 13:3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

Mat 13:4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

Mat 13:5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

Mat 13:6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Mat 13:7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

Mat 13:8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

Mat 13:9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Jesus is famous for two teaching methods. One is the miracles which he performed. The other is the parables which he told. We have no record in Matthew of him telling any of the parables in the

first twelve chapters. He had presented his famous sermon on the mount. He had performed a number of miracles, but we wait until this thirteenth chapter to find him using the parables. Now we find a chapter completely filled with parables. Why is this true? The reason will be given by the Lord himself. Watch for it.

Because of the miracles, vast multitudes were gathered to be healed and to hear his wonderful teaching. He then used a strange method of speaking to them. He entered into a boat and sat down. The audience stood on the shore where they could easily see and hear him as he told one parable after another.

The first parable had to do with a sower who went forth to sow his seed. Some fell upon the wayside and was eaten by the birds. Some fell among thorns and was choked out. Some fell upon stony ground where there was no depth of soil. And some fell upon good ground, where it multiplied thirty to one hundred times. Jesus then closed the parable by saying, *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear!*

Mat 13:10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

Mat 13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

Mat 13:12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

Mat 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

Mat 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

Mat 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Mat 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

The Lord's disciples were puzzled. They wanted to know why he had begun to speak in parables. They could easily remember the very clear and direct words spoken in the sermon on the mount. Why had Jesus changed?

The Master's answer leaves no doubt that his method of teaching had been changed because of the rebellious attitude of the Scribes and Pharisees.

We found in chapter twelve that Jesus had sharply disagreed with the Pharisees. This conflict went so far as to cause him to warn them about blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. They refused to listen to his teaching or to honor the Father in heaven. God does not force men to obey him. He allows us to use the free will with which he created

us. We are even told God will send strong delusions to those who do not believe the truth and have pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:11-12).

The answer given to the disciples in verses 11-13 shows God's desire to teach those who will learn, and also makes it possible for those who wish to turn a deaf ear to do so.

Jesus went on to say that this was a fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Israel. Isaiah had said,

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; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Isa. 6:9-10).

Jesus words were not a direct quote, but they are so close there is no doubt which of Isaiah's prophecies is meant.

The disciples were then commended for their own attitude. They had understanding hearts, eyes that did see and ears that did hear. They would willingly receive the truths Jesus offered. The Pharisees did not want the truth. Speaking in parables would allow Jesus to complete his work before his enemies became so infuriated as to cause his crucifixion. His schedule had been carefully planned.

Mat 13:17 For verily I say unto you, That

many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Mat 13:18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

Mat 13:19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

Mat 13:20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

Mat 13:21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

Mat 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

Mat 13:23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

The parable of the sower is a perfect example. It was pure nonsense to the Pharisees. It was as clear as crystal to the disciples after Jesus explained it to them. The seed had fallen into various kinds of

hearts. Some would allow it to grow and produce spiritual fruit. Others, for various reasons, would prevent it from growing and flourishing. We can sense the sadness in Jesus when he said the prophets had desired to see and hear the things he was teaching, and that they had not been able because it was not yet time. The time had now come and the foolish Pharisees had chosen to harden their hearts.

Mat 13:24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

Mat 13:25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

Mat 13:26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

Mat 13:27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

Mat 13:28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

Mat 13:29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

Mat 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them:

but gather the wheat into my barn.

Jesus moved on to another parable. This time he told of a sower who had sown his field, only to have someone come along and sow tares or weeds amidst the wheat. His servants wished to know if the tares should be pulled up. They were told they were to allow the tares to grow alongside the wheat until the time of harvest. Otherwise, the wheat might be damaged while the tares were being uprooted.

Jesus is explaining why he did not immediately kill the Pharisees for their opposition. It would have done damage to the disciples themselves. We should learn a lesson from this parable. Christians are often puzzled as to why God allows evil men to continue and prosper. At least a part of the answer is that faithful servants of God could be hurt. Think about it for a moment. If God were to instantly destroy every enemy of the truth, how many of your own loved ones might fall, never to have another chance at repentance? The Lord explained later in the chapter that when the harvest did come, all that did iniquity and failed to repent would be cast into a furnace of fire where there would be wailing and gnashing of teeth. The righteous would be glorified and would shine forth as the sun in the eternal kingdom.

Mat 13:31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

Mat 13:32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

The next parable is the parable of the mustard seed. The kingdom of heaven is like a tiny mustard seed which grows until it becomes a great tree in which birds may rest and be protected. This must have been great comfort to the disciples. Their small numbers would some day be increased until the entire world would be blessed through their faithful lives and teaching. In a sense, the same principle holds true today. Christians may be greatly outnumbered by those of the world. This should not discourage them. One day the truth will cover the globe as the waters cover the sea. See Isaiah 11:9.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Mat 13:33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Mat 13:34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

Mat 13:35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

The previous parable and this present one are considered to be twins. Both teach the spread of the Kingdom of God to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Parable number four likened the kingdom of heaven to leaven in bread. A very small amount of leaven reached out until its influence spread to a large amount of meal. The influence of the tiny group of disciples would spread quietly and steadily unto every tribe, nation, kindred and tongue. It had been predicted that the Christ would teach in parables (Psa. 78:2). They were now seeing that prophecy come true.

Mat 13:36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

Mat 13:37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

Mat 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

Mat 13:39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

Mat 13:40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

Mat 13:41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

Mat 13:42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Mat 13:43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Jesus knew the value of drawing pictures in the minds of his listeners. One parable follows another repeatedly in this chapter. The Lord had presented the parable of the tares and then moved on to others before his disciples were satisfied that they understood the lesson of that parable. They requested that He give them a more complete explanation.

Jesus explained that the One who sowed the good seed is the Son of man. This was one of the names given to Himself in the Scriptures. I think the reader might be astonished to find the number of times in the four accounts of the gospel of Christ that He is called by this name. I challenge the careful student to check this statement out in a complete concordance or a Bible computer search program.

Of course, the good seed is the Word of God. When it germinates in the hearts of men, it will

bring forth faithful lives. The harvest will then be pleasing to the Father in heaven.

At the same time that Jesus is sowing the good seed, Satan is sowing tares. These tares are those who serve the Prince of Darkness.

The time will come when the final harvest occurs. Then God's angels will be sent forth to gather the wicked to be burned in the fires of hell. In the end of the world all of that which is offensive to God will be cast into those everlasting fires. There will be much wailing and gnashing of teeth.

When the wicked have been removed from among the righteous, the purity and faithfulness of the faithful will shine forth with glory that is unhindered by the followers of the Devil. Malachi described Jesus as the Sun of Righteousness. The faithful will be glorified with Him when he comes.

2Co 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Mat 13:44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

The next parables discussed the preciousness of the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom was like unto a treasure hidden in a field. While a man was

working the field, he came across the treasure by accident. He was so happy when he found it that he went and sold all of his possessions in order to buy the field containing the treasure.

I think we can all understand the joy of this man. He had found something so valuable that it made everything he owned look nearly worthless. He would give up everything he had to possess it.

There are some critics of the Bible who use this parable to accuse Jesus of promoting unholy greed. They claim it was dishonest for the man to buy the field for less than he knew it was worth. Parables cannot be handled that way. It is dangerous to look beyond the main point of the parable. Those who twist the parables to fit their own philosophies have run headlong into the same pit the Pharisees were digging for themselves. The lesson of the parable is that nothing in this world begins to compare with the value of the Kingdom of Heaven. Men must be careful not to discard the baby with the bath water.

Mat 13:45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

Mat 13:46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

The next parable is nearly a twin to the one of the treasure in the field. This time a merchant was seeking goodly pearls. He finally found one so precious that he was willing to sell all of his possessions to buy it.

There is one strong difference in these two parables. The man who was working the field stumbled on the treasure by accident. The merchant who found the goodly pearl of great price was looking diligently for such a treasure. There are persons in the world who are introduced to spiritual truth almost accidentally. They are going about their life seeking to make a living for their families. While doing so, they come into contact with faithful Christians. When they see the joy and hope of the Christian, they decide to seek that way of life for their own. Sometimes it means giving up friends and possessions. But, they are willing to lay down their life for Christ. They know the crown of life is too precious to throw away.

Other men and women have seen the hopelessness of this world before they are introduced to the Kingdom of God. They seek with all their heart to find a better way. When they find the Kingdom of Heaven, they realize the contrast between what they were trying to leave behind and the beauty of that which they have found.

Mat 13:47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:

Mat 13:48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

Mat 13:49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,

Mat 13:50 And shall cast them into the

furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Mat 13:51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

Mat 13:52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

The Lord's next parable contained a new truth. Not everyone who entered the kingdom would ultimately receive the inheritance. It was like a net cast into the sea. Good fish and bad fish are gathered into the net. The fisherman hauls in the net and separates the good into his boat. He casts the bad overboard. God will some day examine those who have entered the kingdom to see if they have proven faithful. If not, they will be separated from the faithful by the angels who reap the earth. The faithless will be cast into the furnace of fire. It is not enough to find the precious treasure. One must cherish it and cling to it.

After finishing this parable of the net, Jesus asked his disciples if they understood what he had been saying. They replied that they did. He had one last word of advice for them. If a scribe or a Pharisee did hear, see and understand the truth, he would be a very valuable servant of God. He would bring to God's service much of the knowledge of the Old Testament, and he would add to that the wonders of the New Testament. We can hardly fail

to think about the apostle Paul. He said he had lived the life of a Pharisee. When he finally was persuaded of the truth of Christ and his Kingdom, Paul brought forth things new and old. He wove them into book after book of our present Bible. Jesus would not dismiss men just because they had been Pharisees. He would only dismiss them because of their hatred of the truth. Surely God gives men the opportunity of hearing and obeying. Then waits anxiously for their response.

Mat 13:53 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

Mat 13:54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?

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

Mat 13:56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?

Mat 13:57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.

Mat 13:58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Jesus then went into the country around Nazareth where he had been raised. When he entered into their synagogue they were astounded at his wisdom and his miraculous works. They cried out, *Whence hath this man these mighty works (Matt. 13:54)?* Christ did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. Let us be certain we do not dismiss Jesus Christ as simply another human teacher. We must not be like the Pharisees. We must **see with our eyes, hear with our ears and understand with our hearts**. Then our light may shine forth in the Kingdom of our Father.

Chapter 14

Mat 14:1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,

Mat 14:2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

Mat 14:3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

Mat 14:4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.

Mat 14:5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

Those of you who are familiar with your Bible, will have realized the serious conflict which gets sharper and sharper as the record of Matthew moves forward. The self-centered and pride filled scribes and Pharisees are on the side of evil. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is on the side of righteousness. Here we will see each side demonstrating their power.

The miracles which Jesus did, and the parables which he told were drawing great crowds to him. King Herod heard of these things and became very much concerned.

I think it is interesting that this Herod is the son of the Herod who tried to kill Jesus Christ at his birth and yet he thinks the great works which are going on are being done by John the Baptist, risen from his grave. He should have recognized the power of the Messiah rather than immediately

thinking of John the Baptist. The fact that his mind focused on John is proof of the great guilt which lay upon his soul for what he had done.

A look at a good Bible dictionary will show you what an evil and wicked family brought this King Herod into a place of power. They would destroy anything within their reach to sit upon a throne. This included their own closest relatives, such as husbands, wives, brothers and sisters. No one who presented a threat to their position was safe. To oppose them was to risk one's life.

Now John the Baptist had done just that. He had told Herod he had no right to live with his brother Philip's wife. Have you noticed that John did not seem to have a great concern about the reputation or the power of those whom he called to repentances? Kings and servants alike must

Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Everyone was commanded to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

Like many men and women today, Herod did not take too well to the preaching of righteousness. Herodias, with whom he shared his bed, liked it even less.

Mat 14:6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.

Mat 14:7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

Mat 14:8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's

head in a charger.

Mat 14:9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.

Mat 14:10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.

Mat 14:11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.

When Herod's birthday arrived, the daughter of Herodias danced before Herod and others. Herod was so much pleased that he offered the young woman whatever she desired. A king should have more wisdom. You simply do not promise to give people a blank checkbook and tell them to write in whatever they please. This makes sense only if the person given the free checkbook is of the highest character. And that was not the case with either Herodias or her daughter.

Herodias had already instructed her daughter that if such a promise was made she should ask that the head of John the Baptist be given to her on a charger (or platter).

When the young woman made the request, Herod regretted his promise. However, he had made a clear promise and his guests had heard it. He decided to honor the promise. John was beheaded. John will no doubt be among the martyrs described in the book of Revelation, who were beheaded for the testimony of the Word of God (Rev. 6:9).

Jesus declared in the book of Matthew that John the baptist was greater than the Old Testament prophets. That is a very meaningful statement.

Mat 14:12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

Mat 14:13 When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

When Jesus heard of the murder of John, he departed from the area by a ship and went to a deserted place. Most of us can sympathize with the Lord. We sometimes wish to be alone when life's burdens press upon us. John the Baptist was Jesus own cousin. He had lived a rough and rugged life of sacrifice in order to prepare for his task of calling men to repentance. He had baptized Christ. He had been fearless in condemning sin. Now he had been killed for his efforts. Jesus must have been very heavy of heart.

Mat 14:14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

Mat 14:15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

Mat 14:16 But Jesus said unto them, They

need not depart; give ye them to eat.

Mat 14:17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

Mat 14:18 He said, Bring them hither to me.

Mat 14:19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Mat 14:20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

Mat 14:21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

But the Lord was not to be allowed any privacy. The multitudes followed him on foot, leaving the cities and seeking him out in the countryside. The Master could not turn them away. He had compassion on them and proceeded to heal their sicknesses. Many a gospel preacher has longed to depart into the wilderness and escape from the press of the crowd for a time. Many times, just as Jesus did, the preacher will find there is no time for escape. The business of the Father must be attended to. I suggest this is not just a problem for preachers, but one that is common to every faithful servant of the Kingdom of God.

As the evening came, Jesus disciples saw a very serious problem arising. They realized there was not enough food for the thousands of people who

had come together. They suggested to Jesus that he send the people to the villages where they might buy something to eat.

This prepared the way for one of the best known of all Jesus miracles; the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand with loaves and fishes. Most of the miracles are not recorded in all four of the accounts of the gospel. This one is.

The Lord informed his disciples that it was not necessary to send the people to the villages. They could remain with him. The disciples were to feed them.

Quickly, the disciples replied that they could hardly feed such large number of persons with the five loaves and two fish which they had with them. Under normal circumstances, this would have hardly been sufficient to feed the small band who traveled with the Lord, to say nothing of the thousands who had gathered around him now. Even after observing the many miracles Jesus had already done, the disciples wondered about his ability to solve the present problem.

To this very day, the power of Jesus Christ is doubted by those who should have complete confidence. Some who stand in the pulpits of the land try to explain away such miraculous events. One commentator has suggested that a supply of food was hidden and that the disciples brought Jesus food from this hidden storehouse. I have mixed feelings toward such preachers and writers. I feel pity for their fearful condition of mind. At the same time I am filled with outrage that they attempt to reduce Jesus Christ to the position of

no more than an excellent teacher. If Jesus and his disciples deceived the people, neither he nor his disciples were even good teachers. The fact is, they did not deceive.

Jesus commanded that the multitude sit down on the grass. He then took the five loaves and two fishes, and looking up into heaven, he blessed and broke them. Before he had finished, over five thousand men, plus women and children, had been fed. One would certainly expect at least as many women and children to be present as there were men. If this is true, the total number of persons fed could possibly have reached ten thousand.

Although it is not recorded in this account in Matthew, Jesus often used such occasions to teach great spiritual lessons. In the gospel record, as given by John, Jesus fed a multitude and then told them he was the Bread of Life. Their ancestors had eaten the manna which had fallen from heaven and they had died. But if they fed upon his teachings, they would never die. Of course, the death they would not have to suffer was eternal separation from God.

Matthew does not stop by saying the five thousand men were filled. He added that there were twelve baskets full of fragments picked up afterward. It may be meaningful that there were twelve apostles. Was each of them handing out food from a basket as the crowd was fed? If so, each basket was full when the multitude had been satisfied. At any rate, The Son of God has power on earth to feed both those who are hungry of body **and** of soul. His providing power will never run out. There will

always be enough for those who wish to come to him.

Mat 14:22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

Mat 14:23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Mat 14:24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

Then Jesus caused his disciple to enter into a ship and go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. He indicated he would come to them later. The multitude was sent away and the Lord went to a mountain where he could pray alone. This is an example for us. When God has done some good thing through us, we would also be wise to retire to a quiet place and thank him for using us in his service. The prayer of Jesus is not recorded for us. However, knowing the Lord, it would have been a prayer of gratitude and a request for greater opportunities of service in the future.

As the ship carrying the disciples reached the midst of the Sea, a storm arose. I am told these fierce storms still appear very rapidly on this particular body of water. The disciples were fearful for their lives. This tells us something of the strength of the

waves. Some of these disciples were fishermen. They were used to dealing with tempests. If they were afraid, the storm must have been savage.

Mat 14:25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

Mat 14:26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

Mat 14:27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid

Mat 14:28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

Mat 14:29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

Mat 14:30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

Mat 14:31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

Mat 14:32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

Mat 14:33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

It was the fourth watch of the night. This would have been sometime between three and six in the

morning. Between the storm and the darkness, the disciples were having difficulty in seeing. Suddenly they saw a figure walking across the waves. This caused them to be even more troubled. They thought it was a spirit and cried out in fear. It was Jesus. He said, *Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid.*

Peter cried out, *If it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.* Jesus said, *Come.* Peter began, but soon began to sink into the water. He said, *Lord, save me.* Jesus caught him and said to him, *O, Thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?*

There are many storms in this life on earth. The winds and the waves encompass us on every side. Some men try to walk upon the water by themselves. They gradually sink and are overwhelmed by the storm. Others catch a vision of Jesus and his power. They are ready to walk with him. But then they lose confidence and begin to drown. At that point they have two alternatives. They may ignore the Lord and drown, or they may reach out for his hand and enter the ark of safety.

Mat 14:34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.

Mat 14:35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;

Mat 14:36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

Jesus and his disciples finally reached the other side of the Sea. There, the men of Genneseret had already heard of his fame. They brought many who were sick and diseased to him. As many as touched him were made whole.

To quickly summarize this chapter, we find the forces of Satan being shown in Herod and his murder of John the Baptist. Then we see Jesus fighting back with the power of God. While Satan and his servant Herod destroy and kill, Jesus and his disciples provided the bread of life

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Chapter 15

MAT 15:1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,

MAT 15:2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

As we study the fifteenth chapter of Matthew, we will see Jesus conflict with the Scribes and Pharisees becoming even more heated. It had been getting warmer and warmer from the time he preached the sermon on the Mount and told his listeners their lives must be more pure and holy than those hypocrites. They did not like such words then, and the condition had not changed. Their anger was reaching a white hot condition by the time of our present lesson.

These pride filled and jealous Jewish leaders came to Jesus with what they considered to be an extremely serious charge. Jesus disciples did not wash their hands before they ate bread. This directly contradicted the teaching of the Jewish elders and Rabbis. They were ready to call Jesus on the carpet for allowing the disciples to neglect such an important matter. What excuse did his disciples have for their behavior?

It helps to understand just what the Scribes and Pharisees were talking about. They were not simply accusing Jesus and his companions of eating with dirty hands. Many a mother has scolded her children for coming to the dinner table without washing their hands. There is good reason for such

concern. Dirty hands can carry disease germs and produce a variety of sicknesses. Mothers are right to insist that their children come to the table with clean hands.

These Jews, however, were interested in something quite different. They were constantly adding ceremonies to the simple Word of God. Their doctors had prescribed all kinds of activities which they were expected to observe. Many of these had nothing to do with the teaching of the Bible.

It is said that this washing of hands was done in a very special way. They had to dip their hands in the water with exactly the right motions. Then the hands had to be held up so the water would flow down the forearm to the elbow and drip from the elbow. They had insisted that these instructions be obeyed as if they were a part of the inspired Word of God. The Jews question really was, “Why do thy disciples transgress the **tradition of the elders**? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.”

Jesus answer was just as blunt as the Pharisee's question. He used a technique which was often very useful to him. He answered their question with one of his own. “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?”

MAT 15:3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

MAT 15:4 father or mother, let him die the death.

MAT 15:5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

MAT 15:6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Jesus reply to them made a contrast between human tradition and divine commandments. Divine commandments are much more important than the traditions developed by men. It was of very little matter that his disciples broke the traditions of men. But, it was extremely important that the Scribes and Pharisees not break the commandments of God, and teach others to do the same. Jesus then went on to explain just what he meant by the comparison he had made.

God had commanded that men honor their father and their mother. This honor included taking care of them in their old age. It appears that the Pharisees had excused men from supporting their parents if they stated that the money would be used as a religious donation.

In the first place, the money probably never got into the contribution basket. The statement that their money was a gift to God was very likely only a way of avoiding a God given command. In the second place, God simply does not require men to neglect their own families in order to contribute to the work of the church. Jesus could see through their deception as if it was not even there.

MAT 15:7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

MAT 15:8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

MAT 15:9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

MAT 15:10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:

MAT 15:11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

Then the Lord proceeded to call them hypocrites. He said their actions had been foreseen ages before by the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah had said men were sometimes guilty of drawing near to God with their speech while they denied Him with their actions.

Jesus followed this by presenting the type of lesson he so often presented. He would begin with a physical matter and then move on to more important spiritual applications. That was his plan here. He explained that the real filth is found on the inside of a man, not on the outside. That which came out of the mouth was far more important in revealing the defiled condition than that which went into the mouth. Let us be certain we understand that Jesus was not teaching physical cleanliness to be unimportant. As a partner in the creation of the entire universe, he would surely have understood

the nature of disease germs. He would no doubt have complimented that mother who directed her children to go wash their hands before eating a meal. Jesus point was that the Pharisees were in greater danger for having filthy hearts than his disciples were for having dirty hands.

MAT 15:12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?

MAT 15:13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

MAT 15:14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

The disciples later came to Christ and asked him if he knew he had offended the Pharisees. He indicated he knew they were offended. However, that made no difference. They were plants which his Father in heaven had not planted. Every plant of that kind would sooner or later be uprooted and destroyed.

He warned his disciples that the Jews were spiritually blind. If the disciples were so foolish as to be caught up in the deception of the Pharisees, both the teacher and the pupil would be lost.

If the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch.

MAT 15:15 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.

MAT 15:16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?

MAT 15:17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

MAT 15:18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

MAT 15:19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

MAT 15:20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

Peter wanted Christ to explain a bit more clearly just what he meant by his words. Jesus obliged him. Out of the heart are the issues of life. If the heart is evil, the speech and the actions will be evil. If the heart is pure, the speech and the actions will be pure. Out of an evil heart come lies, murders, theft, adultery and fornication. These are the things that truly defile the soul of a man.

MAT 15:21 Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

MAT 15:22 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.

MAT 15:23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought

him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

MAT 15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

MAT 15:25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

MAT 15:26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

MAT 15:27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

MAT 15:28 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.

Next, Jesus did something that seems out of the general pattern. He healed a Gentile woman. Along the coast of Palestine lived a group of people known as the Phoenicians. They lived as neighbors to the Jews, though they were not Jewish.

Why was it so strange Jesus would heal a Gentile? It was strange because he had been sent first to the Jews. Why did he do it? Because the Jewish leaders such as the Scribes and Pharisees had rejected him.

As the Lord passed along the border of the Phoenician territory, a woman begged him to heal her daughter who was vexed with a devil. Jesus at first told her he had not been sent to her and her people. He was sent to the lost sheep of the house

of Israel. But, she would not take no for an answer. She explained that she was surely as valuable as a dog. The dogs did not eat at the table with their more privileged masters. Yet they were permitted to eat the crumbs which were left over.

Jesus responded to her and caused her daughter to be made whole. The Jews had rejected his blessings and would not allow him to help them. But this Gentile woman desired his blessings and therefore he would give them to her.

MAT 15:29 And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

MAT 15:30 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:

MAT 15:31 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.

MAT 15:32 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.

From the coast of the Mediteranean Sea, the Lord went to a mountain. The multitudes followed him there, desiring to receive blessings at his hand.

The dumb spoke. The blind saw. The lame walked. The diseased became well. Many, many came to the feet of the Master. The miracles which he did were so wonderful no one could deny them. They stood in awe of his power and glorified the God of Israel.

Once again, Jesus fed a multitude of persons with a small quantity of food. Vast numbers of persons were following him across the countryside. They had left their sources of food behind, hoping to get something more valuable than food. As Jesus looked out across their faces, he felt compassion on them. They had not eaten for three days. He desired to feed them.

MAT 15:33 And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

MAT 15:34 And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.

MAT 15:35 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

MAT 15:36 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.

MAT 15:37 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.

MAT 15:38 And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

MAT 15:39 And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

The disciples wanted to know where they would find enough food to care for thousands of people. Isn't this interesting? Jesus had previously fed five thousand men, plus women and children. He had provided enough food for all of them from five loaves and two small fish. Now the disciples raised the same objection they had raised before. Where would they get enough food to feed such a multitude. We are astounded at their slow learning.

Yet we are guilty of the same kind of conduct. How wonderfully we are blessed day by day. In spite of this downpour of blessings, when we get into a bind, we sometimes wonder why God is not aware of our suffering. If Jesus can feed over five thousand persons with five loaves and two fishes, or with seven loaves and a few fish, he can and will see that our own needs are cared for. Let us not forget his wisdom, his power and his love.

The gospel of Jesus Christ has not had an easy time. It faced obstacles in the first century while the Lord was introducing the Kingdom of Heaven. It has faced obstacles in every century from that one to our own.

Some of the hindrances come from persons outside Christ's disciples. They come from those who refuse to recognize Him as the Son of God. They come from men and women who are spiritually lame, blind, deaf and diseased with sin, but who do not recognize they are spiritually poor and naked and

wretched and blind.

Other hindrances come from within the fold of God. Just as Jesus disciples of old learned so very slowly, some of God's children today fail to grow and develop as rapidly as they should. They do not whet their appetites for living water and the bread of life. And this is in spite of the fact that God has made both abundantly available to them.

One can easily see this in any congregation of fifty or more people. There will be those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. They are the ones who are present at every opportunity when the saints gather. They feed themselves spiritually and then go out into the highways and the byways to exercise themselves in the service of God.

Then we see others who miss when they could be present, and who only occasionally find a time to put their Christianity into practical service. They are satisfied with a spiritual meal now and then. Their souls may barely stay alive, but they are shriveled and malnourished.

Chapter fifteen of Matthew has a lot to say. Christ will provide his blessings for those who desire them and are grateful for them. On the other hand, he will turn away from those like the Pharisees who believe themselves to be completely self sufficient. When men refuse to take his help, he will not force them to accept it.

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Chapter 16

Mat 16:1 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.

Mat 16:2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.

Mat 16:3 And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

In the sixteenth chapter of Matthew Jesus was beginning to prepare his disciples for his departure. He knew that when he was taken from them, there would be a need for tremendous commitment on their part to keep them from giving up all hope. After his death they would remember some of the things he said to them in our present study. This would allow them to complete the tasks Jesus had set out for them.

Both the Pharisees and the Saducees came to the Lord, asking for him to provide them a sign from heaven. They were questioning his right to call himself the bread and the water of life. Who was he to say the traditions of men made void the commandments of God? If he truly had divine authority to make such statements, he should prove it by some spectacular event in the heavens. And so they asked him for a sign from heaven.

Mat 16:4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet

Jonas. And he left them, and departed.

Jesus' reply was that they were able to look into the heavens and predict clear or foul weather. However, they seemed unable to understand the spiritual things going on around them. They were being provided with many signs, but they were blind to them. Signs were given at the command of God, not at the whim of men. A sign would come one day. It would be the sign of Jonah. As Jonah was in the depths of the sea for three days and nights, so would the Son of man be in the heart of the earth for three days. Then he would rise from the grave. This would be the clinching argument that Jesus was the Son of God and the hope of men.

Mat 16:5 And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

Mat 16:6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

After this, Jesus and the disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee. When they reached the other side, the disciples realized they had forgotten to provide bread to eat. Their physical hunger provided Jesus with the opportunity to teach them of the dangers of feeding on the teachings of the rebellious Pharisees and Saducees.

Mat 16:7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have

taken no bread.

Mat 16:8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

Mat 16:9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

Mat 16:10 Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

Mat 16:11 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?

Mat 16:12 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.

The disciples were confused. Was Jesus telling them not to buy bread from these enemies of the truth?

The Lord then chided them for their lack of faith and explained to them what he meant. They had seen him feed five thousand with five loaves and had seen him feed feed four thousand with seven loaves. There had even been more than the multitude needed to eat. Why could the disciples not see that Jesus could provide bread for their physical needs any time he chose? He was not talking about bread made with wheat or corn. He was referring to spiritual food. The spiritual leaven

of the Pharisees and Saducees could poison the inner man. His own teaching was nourishing to the spirit. They must not listen to the poisonous doctrines taught by his opponents.

Mat 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

Mat 16:14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

Jesus then led his disciples down to the village of Caesarea Philippi. There, he proceeded to place them in a position where they must answer one of the most important questions ever asked. He forced them to come to terms with the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" His method of getting their confession is impressive.

He first asked them, "*Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?*" Notice that at this point he does not ask them what they personally think of him. The question is, What do men in general think of me? The answer to this question is revealing. No one seems to think Jesus is insignificant. They cannot think that. He has proven by both his teaching and his miracles that he is someone special. Some think he is John the Baptist. Others think he is Elijah or Jeremiah, or one of the great prophets of the past. It is clear that there is a wide difference of opinion.

Mat 16:15 He saith unto them, But whom

say ye that I am?

Then Jesus pinned them down. His next question was, “*Whom do ye say that I am?*” Now it was not a matter of what other men thought. The disciples must reveal their own convictions. A public confession makes a difference. Once we have committed ourselves in public, we have a greater tendency to hold that position. By making the statement, we clarify our thinking. Our doubts are reduced and our determination increases. Jesus was forcing the disciples to make a clear decision. Would they feed upon the doctrines and denial of the Pharisees, or would they nourish themselves with the teachings of the Son of God?

Mat 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Peter was absolutely right. His confession had two parts. Jesus was the Messiah who had been predicted by all of the divine prophets of the Old Testament. Jesus was also the Son of God. Peter had made his choice. The leaven of the Pharisees was evil. Jesus Christ was the Way, the Truth and the Life. Peter would feed upon his Word.

Mat 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Mat 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build

my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Mat 16:19 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.

Jesus commended Peter for his confession. Peter had not learned these facts from the teachings of men such as the Pharisees. He had heard and watched the Son of God. He knew Jesus was God with us. He was exactly what the Pharisees had been asking for. Jesus himself was the sign revealed from heaven.

The Lord then told Peter that he would build his church upon the confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Some would have Peter to be the rock upon which the Church would be built. It was not Peter upon which the Church was to be built. It was the Rock of Ages. It was the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Every true member of the Church of Jesus Christ will have made that confession before his fellow men. As long as he remains a true Christian he will continue to make that confession, by his words and also by his deeds.

Jesus then told Peter he would give him the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. What he bound on earth would have been bound in heaven. What he loosed on earth would have been loosed in heaven. Again, some think this established Peter as a Pope. This is not true. The binding authority spoken of

here is true of all the apostles. In the eighteenth chapter of this same book we read,

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

Because the apostles were willing to accept and honor the teachings of Christ, they would have the privilege of opening the hearts of men to eternal life. Neither Peter nor any other apostle was given permission to give commandments to men that Jesus Christ had not first given to them.

Mat 16:20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

Mat 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Again, Jesus commanded that they tell no man he was Jesus the Christ. Again, I believe he was regulating the pace at which he would move toward the cross. There were still things to be done. If the apostles had moved too rapidly, Jesus would not have had time to complete the work before him. This command to tell no man has now melted before the Great Commission which requires that every Christian help to preach the gospel to all creatures

of every nation.

By this time, Jesus was able to see the cross squarely in his path. He had persuaded the disciples to make a complete commitment to him as the Son of God and the Messiah. He was ready to tell them of his coming death. The Master told them in words so plain none could misunderstand that he was going to be murdered.

Friends, this is the gospel. Paul said in First Corinthians.

1Cor 15:1-4, Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ was the heart of nearly every sermon in the early chapters of Acts. Here is the bud. The full bloomed flower will be seen in Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. The heart of a man who can deny Christ when he is presented with the facts of the gospel must be very hard. Anyone with the slightest ability to share in the feelings of others must be forced to love the one who first loved us and died for us.

The Lord knew very well, it would not be easy

for the disciples to accept his coming death. It was necessary that he introduce them to it well ahead of time. We must also notice that it does not say Jesus simply told them once. It says he began to shew them how he must be killed. He told them here. It is recorded in the seventeenth chapter twice and also in the twentieth chapter twice. He kept his coming death before them continually.

Mat 16:22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

Mat 16:23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Mat 16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Mat 16:25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Peter could not stand it. He began to rebuke the Lord. He said, *Be it far from thee Lord; This shall not be unto thee (Verse 22)*. There are probably two reasons for Peter's statement. First, it would be hard for him to understand that the Messiah would not reign with earthly power. How could the Anointed of God be so weak as to allow others to kill him? Second, Peter would have felt an enormous sense

of loneliness at the thought of losing Christ as a companion and leader.

Jesus would have none of such talk. Peter understood so little of what was going on. By placing pressure on Jesus not to go to the cross, Peter was actually serving Satan. He was hindering the good news of the gospel.

Mat 16:26 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?

Mat 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Mat 16:28 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.

Peter did not understand the need for the cross. He was learning, but he was not there yet. He had left his fishing boat to follow Christ. He had no doubt suffered much mockery from the Pharisees. But, just as Jesus was about to deny his own life, Peter would have to deny his. There was a cross ahead for Peter. He must also be ready to bear it when the time arrived.

There is a cross for you and for me. We cannot afford to be unprepared when it is ready to be lifted.

Jesus then gave the disciples a vision of what

comes after the cross. If a man will give up this world and win his own soul, he will have chosen wisely. When the Lord returns, he will see that every person who has given himself in this world will be rewarded in the world to come.

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Chapter 17

The beginning of chapter seventeen is better understood if we consider what took place in chapter sixteen. In that chapter, Jesus had asked his disciples who men said he was. The disciples gave him a variety of answers. Some believed he was John the Baptist. Others believed he was one of the great prophets. Then Jesus asked them what they personally thought about it. Peter quickly confessed Jesus to be the Son of the Living God. Jesus then blessed him and indicated that he would build his church upon the rock of that confession. He told Peter he would be privileged to carry the keys to the kingdom. Clearly, this meant Peter would be allowed to unlock the door to the kingdom of heaven. This would take place soon. Jesus said,

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.

The coming of the kingdom of the Son of man would bring drastic changes. God had been preparing for this event from the beginning of the world. He had worked through the time of the patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He had continued his preparation through Moses and the prophets. The time was now at hand for the voices of the past to fade into the background and be replaced by the teaching of the Messiah. God would make this crystal clear on the Mountain of Transfiguration.

MAT 17:1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

MAT 17:2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

Six days after telling Peter the Kingdom would come with power during the lifetime of some of those standing and listening to him, Jesus took Peter, James and John up to a high mountain. There, these three would witness a strange and powerful miracle.

I do not know why Peter, James and John were especially close to the Lord. But they were close. Even when Jesus was at death's door in the Garden of Gethsemene, it was Peter, James and John who were nearby as he prayed just previous to his crucifixion. Later, all three of them were to play very important parts in the spread of the gospel.

When they had climbed the mountain, Jesus was transfigured before them. By this we understand his figure was seen in quite a different way. His clothing became gleaming white, and his face shone like the sun. As we struggle to capture the picture here, we will be helped by thinking about I Corinthians fifteen where we are told faithful Christians will be raised to a glory as different from that we have here as the sun is different from the moon and stars. Jesus left the glory of heaven to come and live with us. Here, in the transfiguration,

it seems the three disciples had a chance to see him in his true glory, even though he had not yet been resurrected from the grave. I think it is also interesting to compare 1 John 3:2. In that verse we are told, *It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

But there was an important reason why Jesus shone in glory on that mountain of old. Let us see what it was.

MAT 17:3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

MAT 17:4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

MAT 17:5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

After the disciples saw the Lord transfigured, Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking with him. Luke tells us what the topic of the conversation was. They were talking about his coming death in Jerusalem. That is important. It was the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross which brought fruit to the seed which both Moses and Elijah had planted. Christ was the goal of both the law and the prophets.

As the three of them talked together, Peter

went into action. Why not build a tabernacle for each of them. This would give them the glory they deserved. However, Peter's suggestion was out of place. A bright cloud overshadowed them. Moses and Elijah faded away, and the voice of God spoke. Jehovah said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*

Moses had had his day. The law of Moses was now to be nailed to the cross. Elijah had had his day. Christ was, even at that moment, fulfilling the prophecies of Elijah and Moses as well as others. Now it was time to hear the voice of the Son of God.

Hebrews 1:1-2 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Moses and Elijah are to be heard today only in the sense that they introduce us to the glorious voice and actions of the Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.

MAT 17:6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

MAT 17:7 And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

MAT 17:8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

MAT 17:9 And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

MAT 17:10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

MAT 17:11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

MAT 17:12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

The three disciples were terrified and fell upon their faces. Jesus commanded them to arise and be not afraid. Elijah and Moses were gone. Only Jesus was left.

The disciples were puzzled. They were being told Jesus was the prophesied Messiah. The kingdom was about to be established. This presented a problem. Malachi had predicted that Elijah would come to introduce the kingdom. *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: (Mal. 4:5)*. But to the best of the disciples knowledge, Elijah had not come. How then could the kingdom come without Elijah coming first?

MAT 17:13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Their misunderstanding arose from the fact that John the Baptist had come in the spirit of Elijah, and not as Elijah in person. Jesus proceeded to tell them John the Baptist was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Malachi. Thus, Elijah had come and the people had killed him.

MAT 17:14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

MAT 17:15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

MAT 17:16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

MAT 17:17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

MAT 17:18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

MAT 17:19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

When Jesus and the three returned from the mountain, they found the rest of the disciples with a multitude who were unhappy. A man had brought his son, who was vexed by a devil, to the disciples for healing. When the disciples tried to cure him,

they were not able. Jesus then rebuked the devil and he departed from the child. The Lord was not happy with the situation. He called them a faithless and perverse generation.

Our world today is afflicted with many problems. Although the days of miraculous cures are in the past, many of our present problems would melt away if men had faith in the Son of God and his teachings. As long as the faith is absent the problems will be present.

MAT 17:20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

MAT 17:21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

MAT 17:22 And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:

MAT 17:23 And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

The disciples could not understand why they were unable to cast out the devil from the child. Jesus explained that it was because of their own lack of faith. If they had possessed a faith as large as a grain of mustard seed, they could have done it. A mustard seed is one of the smaller ones. If they had enough faith, nothing would be impossible for them. They could cause a mountain to be removed

and cast into the sea.

We need to pursue this a bit farther. On the face of it, it seems Jesus might be saying that Christians could perform any miracle imaginable provided they had a sufficient degree of faith. There are those today who insist that is exactly what he was saying. These persons contend that they have produced miraculous healing themselves.

There are several things wrong with this thinking. First, the apostles lived in a day when the message of Christ was being established as divine. The miracles have achieved the purpose for which they were given.

Second, those who claim the ability to perform miracles today are much embarrassed when faced with the challenge of raising men from the dead. If such claims were true today, we should see persons rising from the grave. We should also see the blind go from absolute blindness to a sighted condition in a matter of seconds. We should see shriveled arms and legs made whole at the touch of a hand.

Jesus was speaking to his apostles, who were a very special group. He spoke to them in a very special time. Faith is a powerful tool in the service of the Master. Let us increase it as we are able. But let us be careful to limit the words of Christ here to their own time and place, and then make application of Jesus teachings as they apply to us.

For the third time Jesus reminded his followers that he was facing great danger in the near future. He told them he would be betrayed into the hands of men, after which he would be killed and would rise again.

Peter decided to remain silent this time. Before, he had denied that such a thing could happen. Jesus had scolded him for it and told him he was aiding Satan by saying such a thing would not happen.

The apostles were filled with sorrow. They were beginning to realize Jesus meant what he said. These were not just idle words of guessing. He was actually going to be taken from them. It is probably true that they still did not realize the full impact of Jesus words. There is reason to believe they had no inkling of what he was saying about being raised again. Even after his death, they seemed full of despair and overwhelmed with hopelessness.

But, they would remember these words which the Lord repeated to them about his coming death and resurrection. And, then they would be willing to sacrifice their own lives, knowing that if he could be raised from the dead, so could they.

MAT 17:24 And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

MAT 17:25 He saith, Yes. 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?

MAT 17:26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

MAT 17:27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an

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.

There is one more major thought in this chapter. What should the attitude of the citizens of Jesus coming kingdom toward the tax imposed by the Jewish rulers for the support of the temple.

And so an occasion arose by which Jesus could teach this lesson. The tax collectors came to Peter and asked him if his Master was prepared to pay the temple tax. Peter answered, Yes. His Master was prepared to pay. Later, Jesus had a talk with Peter. He asked him from whom the kings of the earth took taxes. Was it from their own children, or was it from strangers. Peter answered that they received taxes from strangers. Jesus then told him, since he was the son of God, he was not liable for those taxes. However, rather than to offend them, they would pay. Peter was instructed to go and catch a fish. The first fish he caught would have a piece of money in its mouth. Take that money and pay the taxes.

The student of the Bible must be careful here. This is not the same event in which Jesus said to *Render unto Ceaser that which is Caesar's*. At that time Jesus was talking about the obligation of the Christian to support the civil government. The Christian is to pay his or her taxes to the government. The method of obtaining the tax money was the same. It came from the mouth of a fish. But, the rulers in the two cases were different. One

was Caesar and the Roman Empire. The other was the rulers of the Jewish temple. In the meantime Jesus made it clear that the Kingdom of Heaven stood higher in importance than either Caesar or the Jewish rulers.

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Chapter 18

MAT 18:1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

MAT 18:2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

MAT 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

MAT 18:4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

MAT 18:5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

The entire eighteenth chapter of Matthew is concerned with humility. There are four illustrations of the manner in which this humility appears. First, a little child, then a lost sheep. Third, life in the kingdom is presented. Finally, Jesus presents a parable of forgiveness. This is a rich chapter. Let us look at it very closely.

In the previous chapter it had been made clear that Jesus is the outstanding figure in the kingdom of heaven. Moses, as a representative of the Old Testament law, and Elijah as a representative of the prophets, along with Jesus, had appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah had then faded away. God spoke and said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him.* Perhaps this was still ringing in the ears of the disciples as they came to ask Jesus who was

to be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Of course, Jesus was to be the greatest of all. But who would be next most important?

With human ambition being the driving force it is, we can probably guess correctly that several of the disciples had been wondering if they might be the most important.

Jesus had His own special way of teaching impressive lessons. He loved to use common events and objects to illustrate His points. This is one of those times. The Lord called a little child to Him. He set the child in the midst of them where all could see him.

Jesus met the pride and ego of the disciples head on. They were seeking a place of power and recognition. At the same time, they had overlooked the fact that the primary goal of the citizens of the Kingdom is service, not lordship.

Why did He chose to illustrate his point with the small child? Because children have the very characteristics he wished to plant in the minds of his followers. Children are dependent upon their parents. The parents provide food, clothing and shelter for them and also instruct them in their behavior.

The minds of little children are pliable. They are almost like funnels, into which new information can be poured. This is so true that one must be extra cautious to feed the minds of small children with ideas which will be uplifting rather than destructive.

Jesus was telling his disciples they could only be great in the Kingdom of Heaven if they were

willing to humble themselves before both the truth and their fellowman. They were to learn the truth, and they were to serve their neighbor. Present glory is not the goal.

But Jesus went on to present a very important related idea. Since the citizens of the Kingdom must humble themselves, they might be taken advantage of by others. You see, that is exactly what had taken place with Jesus himself. He had left the glory of Heaven and had taken upon himself the form of a servant. This placed him in such a condition that evil men abused and scorned him.

Jesus knew the same things would happen to his disciples; that if they humbled themselves and presented themselves as servants, evil men would seek to misuse them. He also knew that when men open their minds to truth as little children do, there will always be gain sayers who will feed them error and mislead them.

Therefore, Jesus pronounced a curse upon the one who caused one of his humble servants to be either abused or misled.

MAT 18:6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

MAT 18:7 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!

The Lord followed this by saying offenses would come. But woe be to those who caused them. We must understand that to be offended was to lose confidence in Jesus and to be discouraged in the life of righteousness. Anyone who would cause one of those who had humbled themselves to be discouraged in serving God, would suffer serious punishment. Very few of us would take delight in having a massive stone tied to our neck and being dropped into the sea. Yet that would be far more desirable than the the punishment for deceiving one of Christ's faithful brethren.

MAT 18:8 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.

MAT 18:9 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 f

MAT 18:10 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.

MAT 18:11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

If a hand offended one, it would be better to cut it off than to be lost. If an eye offended, it would be better for it to be put out than for one

to be lost. If a man offend one of these children of the Lord, and cause them to be lost, the man who caused God's child to be lost would have to face God and the angels of heaven for this loss.

Just how important is the loss of one of his children to the God of heaven? Jesus proceeded to answer that question. The reason for the coming of Christ to live among us was that he might seek out and save that which was lost. The lost are so important, he will spend large amounts of time and energy trying to save them from disaster.

MAT 18:12 How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

MAT 18:13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

MAT 18:14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Jesus used a lost sheep to make his point. If a man had one hundred sheep and one of them strayed away and was lost, he would leave the ninety-nine who were safe, and he would go in search of that one sheep which was lost. He would search every hill and dale until he found it. And when he had found it, he would rejoice greatly over its return to safety.

Today there are many who have become children of God in the past who were later offended in him. They no longer worship with his other children. They no longer feed upon his Word. They wander about with no spiritual direction. One of the things we hope to do in such programs as this one is to cause some of God's children to return to their Father. If you are such a lost child, your Father will welcome you back with open arms. Repent of your sinful ways and come back to him.

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

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

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

But what must the humble child of God do if someone offends him? Must he simply be silent and do nothing? Jesus says there is something which he can do. He speaks particularly about relations between two brethren in the Lord.

If a brother trespasses against you as a child of God, you are first to go and tell him what he has done. You are to go by yourself first, without others knowing about it. If your brother who has offended you hears what you have to say and makes

things right, you have done a wonderful thing. You have saved the relationship between you and your brother.

What if he will not make things right? In that case, you are to take two or three others with you as witnesses. Then the matter may be judged by a few of the brethren and a proper course of action may be set up by the group.

If the one who has offended you still does not correct his ways, the differences are to be heard by the congregation as a whole. The congregation can then point out a solution to the differences. If the one who is wrong does not listen to the entire congregation, but continues to offend his brother, the offender is to be treated as a heathen. He is to be cut off like the hand which offends, rather than to cause the entire body to be lost in hell.

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

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

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

Here the Lord makes a statement which might seem like it was unrelated to what he has just been discussing. It is not!

In chapter sixteen of Matthew, Jesus had told

Peter this same thing. He had told him he would be given the keys of the kingdom, and then he had spoken these same words. Notice that this is followed immediately by saying when two or three are gathered in his name and make a request, the request will be honored. He adds that he is in the midst of those who have gathered in his name.

I think it is not an accident that this teaching follows the command for the church to treat the rebellious offender as a heathen and a publican. Jesus is saying, I support you in the withdrawal of fellowship from such a person. When you have determined that such a person is to be rejected by the flock, I will back you in that action. If you determine, through my teachings, that a man has responded properly to his fellowmen, and should be held in fellowship, I will support you.

MAT 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

Peter then asked the Lord just how often one must be willing to forgive the brother who had offended him. Should he be forgiven as many as seven times? We sometimes find it easy to see Peter's problem. Some persons repeatedly abuse their fellow Christians. It is one thing to go to them and tell them they have offended once. It is more difficult to go over and over again and try to mend things. One begins to question the sincerity of the offender when the same offense occurs three or four times. Peter's seven times seems extremely generous. Peter

thought that surely it would be enough if one were to forgive his brother seven times in a row.

MAT 18:22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Jesus replied that seven times was not enough. He indicated there was no limit to the number of times one should forgive. Even if the offense occurred seventy times seven, or four hundred and ninety times, the one offended must still be ready to forgive. It is not likely that one will be offended four hundred and ninety times by the same person. The point is not the number; it is the willingness to be long-suffering.

MAT 18:23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

MAT 18:24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

MAT 18:25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

MAT 18:26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

MAT 18:27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

MAT 18:28 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.

MAT 18:29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

MAT 18:30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

MAT 18:31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

MAT 18:32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

MAT 18:33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee.

MAT 18:34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

MAT 18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

The Master told a parable which illustrated his own attitude toward those who will not forgive an offender. A certain man owed a king a very large sum of money. Since he did not have the money,

the king was about to sell all of his possessions to pay the debt, even his wife and children. The man fell down and begged that the debt might be forgiven. The king forgave him. Then the servant went back and found someone who owed him a small amount of money. He demanded that the man pay him. The one who owed him the money begged that the debt might be forgiven. But he would not forgive it. Others who saw what had happened went and told the king what had happened. Since the man had not forgiven the one who owed him a minor debt, the king reconsidered and delivered him to the tormentors until he paid the large debt he owed the king.

Christ then remarked that if one would not forgive his brother who offended him, he could not expect the Father in Heaven to forgive him.

This entire chapter emphasizes humility and forgiveness. The Kingdom of Heaven is to be made up of persons who are as humble and forgiving as little children. The unforgiving, and those who seek lordship and fame, should reconsider their motives.

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Chapter 19

MAT 19:1 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan;

MAT 19:2 And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

MAT 19:3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

MAT 19:4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

MAT 19:5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh.

MAT 19:6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Usually it is true that there is a unifying thought in chapters of the Bible. It is a little harder to find in this chapter of Matthew, but it is there. This time it deals with what a person must be willing to sacrifice in order to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The chapter begins with a discussion of commitment in marriage. A successful marriage requires a willingness to place the welfare of one's husband or wife before that of one's self. Unless

one is able to do so, the Kingdom of Heaven may well escape from his grasp.

Much of Jesus activities up to this time took place in the northern part of Palestine around the Sea of Galilee. He now moved in a southward direction into Judea. As he traveled, the multitudes followed him. Large numbers of persons were healed by his divine power.

This pleased the common man. However, it infuriated the Pharisees. They became even more dedicated to destroying him. They left no stone unturned as they tried to find a flaw in his life or his teaching. They decided to try setting his teaching up in opposition to that of Moses. If they could prove he was contradicting Moses, they felt they could also show he was opposing God, since Moses was a great prophet and the one through whom the law was given.

So, they asked him a question. *Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?* This question is just as critical today as it was in the time it was proposed here. When half the marriages are ending in divorce, something is desperately wrong. Jesus answer to this question, if heeded, would heal many sore and dying marriages in every land and every age.

Jesus bypassed the law of Moses and went back to the very beginning. He scolded the Pharisees for not knowing the scriptures as well as they should have. They should have known that when God instituted the family, he had created one man and one woman. That was his ideal plan from that day onward. When one man and one woman leave father and mother and unite in matrimony, God has joined

them together. They are not to separate.

But the question the Pharisees asked dealt with justifiable cause for divorce. Just what would justify a man in putting away his wife? Moses had permitted a man to put away his wife if he found some uncleanness in her. To the Jews this had become permission to divorce for the most trivial of things. Rather than unfaithfulness to her mate, the uncleanness had become such as meals not being properly cooked. Their list of reasons was about as lengthy as the present list in America.

MAT 19:7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

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

MAT 19:9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

MAT 19:10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.

The Pharisees wanted to know why Moses had commanded a man to write down his objections to his wife before he could get a divorce. If a list of objections made it legal, why was Jesus being so insistent that marriage was permanent?

Jesus made it clear. Moses allowed the writings of divorce because of the hardness of men's hearts. God had **permitted** it. He had certainly not approved of it. From the beginning, a man had been expected to remain married once the vows were taken.

Since the Pharisees had asked if there was any cause for divorce, Jesus explained there was one cause, and one only. That cause which justified a man in putting away his wife was fornication. If a man put his wife away for any other reason than fornication, and married another woman, he had committed adultery. In addition, any man who married that woman who had been put away for a reason other than fornication, had committed adultery with her. The point of the matter is that fornication gives justifiable reason for a man to divorce his wife and remarry. There is no other justifiable reason. Jesus had answered their question.

MAT 19:11 But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.

MAT 19:12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

Even Jesus disciples were confused. If a man had to stay married to his wife unless she committed fornication, it would perhaps be better not to even enter into marriage. Life in a sour marriage would be worse than living alone.

Jesus reply is filled with wisdom. He had been present at the creation of man and he knows the nature of man. He indicated to his disciples that men vary a great deal in their ability to live alone. There are at least three classes of persons who might live a single life. First, there are those who were born without a strong need for the male and female relationship. They would feel no pressure to marry and would find it no problem to remain unmarried.

Secondly, there are those who have been physically injured so that their reproductive organs do not function. These persons would not be capable of fulfilling the male-female relationships. They also would be able to live outside marriage.

Thirdly, there are men and women who have decided marriage would hinder work which they might otherwise do in the Kingdom of God. This last group might well have attraction to the opposite sex, yet would have decided marriage and the care of a family would prevent them from a work they feel they could do for the cause of Christ.

The disciples had indicated it would be very hard to remain married until “death do you part.” It might be better to not marry at all. Jesus answer was that this might be true, but that not all men could make the decision to stay single and abide by it. It would be better for them to marry.

MAT 19:13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

MAT 19:14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

MAT 19:15 And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

The next topic of this nineteenth chapter of Matthew deals with the nature of small children. Someone brought some little children to Jesus that he might pray for them. His response was that children should be allowed to come into his presence. The Kingdom of Heaven would be made up of such persons.

Take notice of the fact that this event is tucked in between the matter of divorce and remarriage, and the story of the rich young ruler. I think this is not a coincidence. Children are pliable. They are innocent. Their will may be bent far more easily than that of an adult. If men and women who have divorce problems would become as little children, most of the problems would be less formidable. If men such as the rich young ruler could become as little children, they could part with possessions more easily.

It is true that this account teaches the innocence of little children. However, I believe there is far more here. This is the second time in this book that Jesus has placed the humility of little children before adults as examples of acceptable citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

MAT 19:16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall

I do, that I may have eternal life?

MAT 19:17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

MAT 19:18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

MAT 19:19 Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

MAT 19:20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

MAT 19:21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

MAT 19:22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

A young man came to the Lord asking him what he must do that he might have eternal life. Jesus answer was that he must keep the commandments of God. The young man then wanted to know which of the commandments he must keep.

Jesus gave him a list of commands which he knew the young man must have known by heart. He must not murder, steal, commit adultery, bear false witness, despise his father or mother, nor even his neighbor.

The young man quickly responded that he had done all of these things for many years. It is interesting that he felt so sure he had kept all of these commands and yet he had a question in his mind as to whether he would inherit eternal life. He knew something was still not right.

Jesus said,

If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowing, for he had great possessions. His affection for his riches on earth was so great that he would give up the eternal riches in heaven in order that he might keep them.

MAT 19:23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

MAT 19:24 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.

Riches are a stewardship. Some rich men cling to their riches as though they were life itself. Many of the rich fall in this class. Others use their riches in the service of the Father in heaven. There are but a few of these. The difficulty of having riches and entering into the Kingdom of God is illustrated by the difficulty of getting a camel through the eye of a needle. ~~With the help of God one might do~~

it. Other-wise, it will not happen. Abraham was a rich man who many herds and flocks. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man indicates Lazarus was in the bosom of Abraham after death. The rich man failed to qualify for heaven. I expect to join Abraham in heaven if I am faithful to the end. Like Abraham, there will be some rich men in heaven. But they will be few.

In a sense, none of us are rich. In another sense, all of us are rich. When the riches of the most wealthy man who ever lived are compared with the riches waiting in the heavenly city, the billions of dollars gathered here on earth are as nothing. And so none of us are really rich on earth. At the same time, the most poverty stricken Christian here on earth is rich beyond description. All that is necessary is to wait a few short years until he has passed through the valley of death and heard the words, *Enter into the joys of thy Lord.*

MAT 19:25 When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

MAT 19:26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

MAT 19:27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

MAT 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, 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.

MAT 19:29 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 an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

MAT 19:30 But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

Again the disciples were bewildered. They asked, *Who then can be saved?* They were so certain men would find it impossible to give up worldly goods, they felt no one would qualify for entry into heaven.

Jesus agreed men would need more than their own strength to make the choice of God over mammon. But, God would provide his help, and with that help a man could seek first the Kingdom of Heaven.

Peter was always ready to take the initiative in responding to the Master. He did so this time. He seems to show a streak of pride when he says, *Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?* This is surely a follow-up of what Jesus said to the rich young ruler. If a man must give up worldly possessions to qualify for entry into the Kingdom of Heaven, Peter was confident that the disciples had met the test. He had left his fishing boat to follow Christ. No doubt he would receive that grand reward. We can almost see his imagination at work. Would it be gold and silver? Would it be houses and land? Would it be fame and fortune? Peter is almost chomping at the

bit trying to visualize what was to be his. Jesus assured him that he and the other apostles would some day sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Through the Word of God which the apostles presented to the world, they have received their throne and they reign today with their Lord. Those who deny themselves for Christ will receive far more than they give up.

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Chapter 20

MAT 20:1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

MAT 20:2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

MAT 20:3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

MAT 20:4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

MAT 20:5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

MAT 20:6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

MAT 20:7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

MAT 20:8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

MAT 20:9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

MAT 20:10 But when the first came, they

supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

MAT 20:11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

MAT 20:12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

MAT 20:13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

MAT 20:14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

MAT 20:15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

MAT 20:16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

The twentieth chapter of Matthew moves us even closer to the cross of Christ. There is much in this chapter dealing with the rewards one may expect in the kingdom of heaven, and how to gain those rewards. Jesus is ever looking to the land of endless day. Everything which is done here is but preparation for life beyond the resurrection.

As the last chapter closed Jesus informed his followers that the first shall be last and the last

shall be first. This chapter begins with an illustration of that truth.

The Lord spoke of a householder who went out early in the morning to hire workers to labor in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a penny a day and sent them to work. Three hours later he hired another group and told them he would pay them that which was right. He did this for another group another three hours later and for a fourth group some nine hours after the first workers began their labors. Finally, he went out eleven hours after the first group had started work and hired even more.

When evening came the householder proceeded to pay all of the workers for their efforts. He paid each of them the same amount. When the ones who began early in the day saw they had received no more than those who were hired eleven hours later, they accused the householder of not being fair. They had worked twelve hours and the last group had worked only one hour. Why should they not receive more?

The householder then turned to them and told them he had the right to pay every man that which he felt was right. Those who had begun early in the day had agreed to work for a certain amount. He had paid that amount. They had no reason to complain about the arrangements made for the others.

It is made clear in this parable that God has a different measuring stick than humans. It might seem to us that the arrangements were unfair. We tend to agree with those workers to bore the sun

in the heat of the day, and who were paid no more than those who worked but one hour. But God has a better view of things eternal than we do. And this is the Kingdom of Heaven we are talking about.

I believe Jesus is telling us those who have first heard the preaching of the Kingdom and responded to it will have no advantage over those who did not hear of it until later. Remember that the Jews had the privilege of hearing the Son of man before the Gentiles did. Jesus is dealing with minds that felt they were God's chosen few because God had worked through them for many centuries. The Jew could not expect a greater reward just because he had heard before the Gentile. The thing which would determine the reward would be the enthusiasm with which each man who heard the Word of God learned it, loved it and lived it.

If God sees fit to reward someone with the bliss of heaven who heard the truth late, why should the man who heard it earlier begrudge the other man of the good things God offers him. Heaven is for all; not just for those who heard about it first. Any man who loves others as Jesus himself loved them will be delighted that any fellow man enters heaven.

Then Jesus made another forecast of his coming death. It might seem these two verses were an afterthought and not connected with what comes before and after them. That is not true. Jesus followers had their minds fixed upon this life and the rewards enjoyed here. It was the Lord's purpose to turn their thoughts toward eternal life and its rewards.

MAT 20:17 And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

MAT 20:18 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,

MAT 20:19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

He said, We are going to Jerusalem where the Son of man will be betrayed unto the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn him to death and deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, to scourge and to crucify him. The third day he will rise again. Each time Jesus speaks of his death, the details are made a little clearer. There can be no mistaking what is going to happen to him now.

I do not know about you my friend, but I am amazed at the courage of Christ. He knew exactly what was going to take place when he got to Jerusalem. In spite of that he traveled onward toward Golgotha. He did it for you and for me. I will forever be grateful. He deliberately died for me. I will try to deliberately live for him.

MAT 20:20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worship-ping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

MAT 20:21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? 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.

MAT 20:22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

MAT 20:23 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.

MAT 20:24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

MAT 20:25 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 exercise authority upon them.

MAT 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

MAT 20:27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

MAT 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

The mother of James and John then came to Jesus to make a request. She desired that her two sons might sit on his right and left hand in the Kingdom.

Little did this poor woman know what she was asking. Jesus would have to die between two thieves before he was raised to sit at the right hand of God. No doubt this woman was also thinking in temporal terms. It is likely that in her mind, the Lord would gather an earthly army and would conquer the earth. In particular, he would throw off the oppression of the Romans who had made the Jews little more than a nation of bondservants. She could no doubt see a vision of Jesus sitting upon a throne of gold, embedded with emeralds, diamonds and pearls, holding a golden sceptre and looking out across a vast multitude of persons, bowing and paying homage to him.

Her sons James and John were to become great men in the Kingdom, but not in the sense she was asking.

Jesus then addressed the two sons. By reading the different accounts of this same event, it becomes clear that James and John were in on the request. They were with their mother when it was made.

The Master asked them if they were able to drink of the cup from which he drank. They said they were able. They did not know it was the cup of suffering of which he spoke. He said they would indeed drink of his cup. However, it was not his to say who would sit on his right and left hand in the Kingdom. Those positions of greatness would be appointed by the Father. This harmonizes with what was said in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. God is determining who will receive eternal rewards by his own divine principles, not by human standards.

The rest of the disciples were indignant when they heard what had happened. Jesus called the group to him and began to mend the malice. He pointed out that it was common in the Gentile world for the most powerful men to hold great authority and to be princes over the rest. The standard for appointment was the ability to exert control over others by force.

It was not to be that way in the kingdom of heaven. Greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven would be determined by the service a person provided for others. *Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.* And of course that is the rule by which Christ himself lived. His greatness arose from his service.

We sometimes realize the truth of this in the temporal realm. One who performs the most menial tasks is vitally important. If you have trouble understanding what I mean, let me ask you what would happen in a modern city if the garbage was not picked up for a couple of weeks. Mayors are not the only important figures. Those who serve and give the most of themselves are the ones who are truly the greatest, both in the Kingdom and outside it.

MAT 20:29 And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.

MAT 20:30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.

MAT 20:31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they

cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.

MAT 20:32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?

MAT 20:33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

MAT 20:34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

Jesus and his disciples then moved from Jericho toward Jerusalem. The cross was not far ahead. We have reason to believe this territory was dangerous. According to the Lord, there was a man who went in the opposite direction one day. He was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. This man fell into the hands of thieves who beat him and robbed him. It is not difficult to imagine how this could happen. I suspect the country is much the same today as it was in Jesus time. Jericho is not too far from the northern end of the Dead Sea. As one moves from Jericho toward Jerusalem the way moves sharply upward. The Dead Sea is far below sea level. Jerusalem is above sea level. As one moves along that road there is much barren sand and rock on each side of the road. It would provide a perfect hiding place for robbers to spring out and remove the possessions of the traveler.

It was this forlorn country through which Jesus and his small band were now trudging as they made their way toward the famous City of David.

History would soon be made there as the cross received its burden.

By this time it was difficult for Christ to go anywhere without the presence of a crowd of persons. Even in this laborious journey upward from Jericho to Jerusalem, a multitude began to crowd around him.

As they moved along, two blind men were sitting by the side of the road. They cried out to him, *Have mercy on us O Lord, thou son of David*. It seems clear that his fame went ever before him. These two blind men were apparently waiting for his passing. They called him by two names which were correct. He was both Lord and son of David. He is spoken of as Lord in the second Psalm. He is prophesied to be the son, or descendant, of David in several places. The blind men knew this was no ordinary man who passed their way. They were prepared to take advantage of his powers if they could.

Jesus stopped and asked them, what it was they wished for him to do. They replied that they desired their eyes to be opened that they could see. Why did Jesus ask them what he could do for them? Did he not know of their blindness? I believe there is no doubt that he knew as well as they did that they were blind. God expects us to communicate with him. While my children were growing up, I was quite familiar with the things they needed. I did my best to provide for those needs. Sometimes I provided before they asked. Other times I provided after they asked. It was a pleasure to be able to respond to their requests. I am convinced the Lord feels the same.

Jesus responded to their pleading and caused their eyes to be opened. He touched their eyes and they were immediately able to see. How different this is from much that is claimed as divine healing today? These were not men who simply had difficulty in seeing, and who were made to see better over a period of time. These were men who could not see at all. When Jesus got through with them they were able to see. I wish we could have examined them with modern optometrists instruments. I would not be at all surprised to find their vision was 20/20.

Once again, we have the marks of the true miracle as performed by the Lord and his apostles. The action was a public action. It was undeniable. It was immediate. Only the power of God could enable a man to do such things. Nicodemus was right.

Joh 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

Joh 3:2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

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Chapter 21

Mat 21:1 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

Mat 21:2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

Mat 21:3 And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

This chapter is concerned with Jesus entry into the city of Jerusalem shortly before his arrest and crucifixion. We can learn several very important lessons from this chapter about the way men react to Jesus Christ.

Let us then enter into our study of the twenty-first chapter of Matthew. Jesus had several times predicted that when he went to Jerusalem the next time, he would be arrested, killed, buried and raised up after three days. We will now see how his teaching will prepare for this series of events.

One of the most impressive things about the Son of God was his complete control of the most difficult situations. He was fully aware of his upcoming death. Yet he moves directly toward it with a composure of spirit that no mere man could possibly have shown. He is the prophesied King of the Jews. His behavior as he entered into Jerusalem and confronted those who were attempting to destroy him is majestic and just what we would expect from the Son of

the Living God. It will not be Jesus who is really on trial. It will be those who reject the Way, the Truth and the Life. Also we must remember that Jesus knew the end from the beginning. He knew when he left heaven that he would be crucified for those who would follow him.

As they came to the Mount of Olives, just outside the city, Jesus told two of his disciples to go into the city where they would find an ass and her colt. They were to be untied and brought to him. If anyone asked them what they were doing, they were to answer that the Lord had need of them.

Mat 21:4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

Mat 21:5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

Mat 21:6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,

Mat 21:7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.

Mat 21:8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.

Mat 21:9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna

in the highest.

Mat 21:10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

Mat 21:11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

Zechariah had prophesied that the coming King would come unto them in a meek and humble fashion, riding upon an ass with her colt (Zechariah 9:9). This was not the way great kings entered their cities. An ass was a beast of burden. A white horse was the steed upon which a King usually rode. The donkey was a peaceful animal. The horse symbolized war. Jesus came to the world as the “Prince of Peace.”

The disciples placed some of their own clothes on the ass and set Jesus upon it. The large multitude which was now following Jesus wherever he went spread their garments before him and cut leaves from the trees to spread in his pathway. Then they went both before him and after him crying out, *Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.*

The entire city of Jerusalem became aware of his entering in. They asked, “Who is this?” The crowd around Jesus replied, *This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.*

Mat 21:12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables

of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

Mat 21:13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Mat 21:14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

Mat 21:15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased,

Mat 21:16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

We will be caused to wonder a little later just what happened to this great multitude who were singing his praises. He will go to the cross almost alone. From the praises of this moment to the jeers of those who stood at the foot of the cross is but a short way. How fickle men are!

When Christ entered into the city, he apparently went directly to the temple of God. There he cleansed the temple once more. He had done so early in his ministry. Now he does it again. The money changers are cast out. Their tables are overturned. The seats of those who sold doves were also turned upside down. Jesus accused these men of making the house of prayer a den of thieves. They were not offering sacrifices to God. They were seeking selfish gain.

After the temple was cleansed, the lame and the blind were brought there to the Master and he healed them.

This was more than the chief priests and scribes could take. They were very much displeased when they heard the multitude crying out that Jesus was the prophesied Son of David. They well knew this descendant of David was to be the coming King. They refused to believe a man riding into town on a donkey was that King. They asked him if he did not hear what the people were saying. The implication is that Jesus should have silenced them by denying what they were saying.

Instead, Jesus told the religious leaders these humble persons had learned how to truly praise him. They were like tiny babes in their humility. But they knew how to give honor to him who deserved honor. Jesus then left the city and went to the village of Bethany, nearby, where he lodged that night.

Mat 21:17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

Mat 21:18 Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.

Mat 21:19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

Mat 21:20 And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig

tree withered away!

Mat 21:21 Jesus answered and 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.

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

The next morning the Lord returned to Jerusalem. On the way he became hungry and he saw a fig tree. As he approached the tree, he found it bore no fruit. He announced that the fig tree would never bear fruit. In a short time the fig tree had withered and died.

The disciples were in wonder as to the rapid withering of the tree. Jesus told them if they had enough faith they would be able to do far more than wither a fig tree. They could move mountains and cast them into the sea. The mountains Jesus spoke of were probably not physical mountains. They were probably power structures such as those the disciples were to face in the future. The Jews were like that withered fig tree. God had cultivated them and given them every opportunity to bear fruit. Instead, they were barren. Within a few years the disciples were to conquer both Jerusalem and Rome with the gospel of Christ. It would require much faith, but we have seen that it could be done.

Mat 21:23 And when he was come into the

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

Mat 21:24 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

Mat 21:25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

Mat 21:26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

Mat 21:27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Jesus came right back to the temple and began teaching. Immediately the chief priests and elders challenged him. They said, *By what authority doest thou these things?* These men had been in charge of the temple. They were not about to let Jesus take over without a fight.

Sometimes the best way to answer a question is with another question. That is what Jesus did. He told them he also had a question for them. If they would answer his question, he would answer theirs. His question was, *The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?*

They were placed in an impossible position. If they said John's teaching on baptism was from men, the people would oppose them because they believed John was a great prophet from God. But, if they said John's teaching was authorized by God, Jesus would ask them why they had not heeded what John preached. Their answer was an attempt to evade the difficulty. They answered that they did not know. They were not able to tell. Jesus then replied that since they would not tell him the answer to his question, he would not answer theirs either.

Mat 21:28 But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.

Mat 21:29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

Mat 21:30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

Mat 21:31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

Mat 21:32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

Jesus followed this by telling the parable of the two sons. A man had told his two sons to go

and work in his vineyard. One said I will not go. Later he repented and went. The other said he would go and then failed to go to work. The Lord asked which of the two sons did the will of his father. The Pharisees agreed it was the one who first said no, then went. Jesus then told them the publicans and harlots would enter into the Kingdom of God before they would. Some of the publicans and harlots had listened to the preaching of John and had repented. The Scribes and Pharisees had listened and scoffed.

This is such a sad picture. Those to whom Jesus spoke were more knowledgeable concerning the Word of God than most of the others. Yet, they closed their eyes and their ears to the truth because of their own selfish ambitions. We cannot afford to follow in their foolish path. Let us learn the Word of God. But let us then sacrifice ourselves in the service of our Father in heaven.

Mat 21:33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

Mat 21:34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

Mat 21:35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another,

and stoned another.

Mat 21:36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

Mat 21:37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

Mat 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.

Mat 21:39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

Mat 21:40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

Mat 21:41 They say unto him, 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.

Mat 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Mat 21:43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Mat 21:44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Mat 21:45 And when the chief priests

and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

Mat 21:46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet

This twenty-first chapter of Matthew closes with Jesus telling the parable of another householder and his vineyard. Vineyards and shepherds were common to the Jews. They knew exactly what Jesus was talking about when he used the keeping of a vineyard to illustrate his points. Vineyards and shepherds with their flock were used often by the Lord to get his points across.

This time Jesus told about a householder who had carefully supervised his precious crop. He had planted it and built a hedge around it for protection. He had dug a place for the pressing out of the juice from the grapes and had erected a tower from which a watchman could see that thieves and wild animals were prevented from destroying the crop. The householder then went away and left men to see that the crop developed and the harvest was reaped.

When the harvest time came, the householder sent servants to the vineyard to collect the resulting fruit. The caretakers beat one of the servants. They stoned another and even killed one of them. The householder then sent another group of servants. They were treated just as the first group was.

Finally, the householder sent his own son. His reasoning was that the caretakers would certainly not treat his own son as they had treated the

servants. He was very wrong. The evil caretakers decided this was the greatest opportunity yet. They would kill the son, and that would allow them to take the vineyard for themselves.

Christ then asked the Jews what they thought the householder would do to those who killed his son when he returned? Their answer was that he would destroy those men and allow others to care for his vineyard. This time it would be someone who would see that fruit was borne.

Jesus made it clear that they themselves were the wicked men. They had rejected the head cornerstone of the temple of God and had tried to grind him into powder. Instead, it would be they who would be destroyed. The Kingdom of God would be removed from their care and would be given to those who would see that it was properly cared for. God would have his fruit whether the Jews would cultivate it or not.

At numerous times the Jews recognized that Jesus teaching in parables referred directly to them. He had said that he spoke in parables in order that those who desired to hear and learn could do so, and those who wished to reject him could also do that. Often the Jews did not even understand what he was.

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Chapter 22

Mat 22:1 And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

Mat 22:2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

Mat 22:3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

Mat 22:4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

Mat 22:5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

Mat 22:6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

In the twenty-first chapter of Matthew, Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem surrounded by an adoring multitude of people who were shouting his praises and strewing his path with branches of palm trees. He was the center of attention for the whole city. Although everything may have looked rosy, the Lord was perfectly aware of danger which lurked just out of sight. Not everyone in Jerusalem was delighted with his appearance. He had engaged in a continuing battle with the Scribes and Pharisees. In fact, chapter twenty-one closed with the chief

priests and Pharisees wishing to lay hands on him but fearing to do so because the multitude knew him to be a prophet of God. These enemies of God were still there and the Master knew it.

Jesus proceeded to tell another of his parables. It would be interesting to know whether he paused as he moved along, or whether he simply related this parable as he was walking with the multitude moving with him.

Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to the marriage of a king's son. As the time for the marriage approached, the king prepared to give a feast for the the son and his bride. He sent his servants out to call guests to the feast. When the intended guests heard about the invitation, they ignored it and refused to come.

God had been preparing for the coming of his son into the world for many long centuries. The prophets of the Old Testament prepared the way by speaking of the wonderful Messiah who was to come. The law of Moses had been a schoolmaster to lead men to the Christ. God several times called his prophets, "*My servants the prophets.*" Though the Jews had the advantage of hearing and reading the invitation the prophets offered, they had turned it down when the Son of God arrived.

Jesus continued his parable. After the first set of invitations had been rejected, the kings sent out other servants to describe the feast in greater detail. The king was ready. He had killed oxen and fatlings. Everything was prepared. They must come and enjoy the feast.

This time the intended guests made a complete mockery of the invitations. They made fun of the feast and went about their own business, which they considered far more important. Some of them even took the servants and abused and killed them.

Mat 22:7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

Mat 22:8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

Mat 22:9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

Mat 22:10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

Recall, my friends, that John the baptist was beheaded for preaching the principles of the kingdom of heaven and telling people it was at hand. John was not the only one to suffer death at the hands of those who believed the Word of God to be foolishness.

The reaction of the King, who of course is the Father in heaven, was great anger. He gathered armies and destroyed those who had murdered his servants. He also burned up their city.

Jesus is looking ahead just a little here. The

Jews were still going to be given a short period of time to either accept or reject the Son of God. This time period did not end until A.D. 70 when the Roman armies surrounded the city of Jerusalem and destroyed the city, burning much of it and killing large numbers of the Jews. According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, the suffering was horrible.

Then Jesus told of a change in direction by the angry king. Since the feast was prepared and the guests who had been invited had decided not to come, the king would invite more worthy guests. He would go out into the highways and byways and invite those who were less proud and would truly love to come to such a feast.

His servants did as the king instructed them and invited everyone they found, whether good or bad, to come to the feast. Many of them accepted the invitation and the feast was held with a fine number of guests.

This is Jesus way of telling the Jews their invitation would be extended to the Gentiles if the Jews continued to treat it with scorn. Jesus sent out his disciples on the limited commission first. They were told to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Later, when he gave the great commission, the Lord told his followers to preach the gospel to every creature. That is the important point in this parable. If the Jews continued to reject the King's Son, the Father in heaven would turn to the Gentiles. That is exactly what happened.

Mat 22:11 And when the king came in to

see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

Mat 22:12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Mat 22:13 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.

Mat 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

Mat 22:15 Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.

There is yet one thing in Jesus parable. When the king came to the feast, he found a man who did not have on a wedding garment. When he was asked why he was there not properly clothed, he could not answer. The king commanded that he be cast into outer darkness.

My friends, do not make the mistake of thinking you can enjoy the marriage of the Lamb of God without meeting the requirements for attending. Both Jesus and John the baptist cried out for men to “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” If the Jews would not repent, they were not properly prepared to participate in the wedding feast. No one, whether Jew or Gentile, will be found in heaven if they insist their will and their goals and purposes are more important than putting forth the effort to please God.

Following this parable, the Pharisees decided to send several waves of opposition to Christ. They would first send the Herodians. Then the Saducees would follow. Finally, they would come themselves. Each of them would have questions to ask which they felt would surely catch the Lord in a trap sooner or later.

Mat 22:16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

Mat 22:17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

Mat 22:18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

Mat 22:19 Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.

Mat 22:20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

Mat 22:21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Mat 22:22 When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

First to approach him were the Herodians. The Herodians were politically minded. They came

with a political question. They wished to know if Jesus thought it right to pay tribute, or taxes to Caesar.

He saw through their trickery with no difficulty at all. He called them hypocrites and asked them to bring him some tribute money and show it to him. When they did, he asked them whose picture and whose inscription was found on the coin. They replied that it was Caesar's.

He then told them to give to Caesar that which belonged to Caesar, and to God that which belongs to God. They had thought he might answer that his kingdom of heaven was more important than Caesar's Roman empire and therefore there was no need to pay taxes. Jesus indicated taxes were under the control of the civil government. But there are things which lie within the spiritual realm and they must be regulated by God. The Herodians had sprung their trap and it had come up empty.

Mat 22:23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

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

Mat 22:25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:

Mat 22:26 Likewise the second also, and

the third, unto the seventh.

Mat 22:27 And last of all the woman died also.

Mat 22:28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

Mat 22:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

Mat 22:30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

Mat 22:31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

Mat 22:32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

The Saducees then gave it a try. Their question was, “Seven brothers have each married the same woman. Each one died leaving her to marry another of the brothers. Which of them could claim her as his wife in the resurrection?”

We have to understand that the Saducees did not even believe in the resurrection. They were not asking the question in a search for truth. They were in on the plot to destroy Jesus. They must have thought their question was extremely clever.

Jesus did not think so. His answer indicated that he thought just the opposite. If they had very much understanding of either the holy scriptures, or of the power of God, they would certainly not have

asked such a question. First, those who have been resurrected and have entered into heaven will not marry. Second, God has the power to change the order of things so that there will be no need for marriage. The scriptures taught of the resurrection. The Saducees needed to pay attention to them. The power of God is evident on every side, they ought also to have taken note of that.

Now the Saducees have been dumbfounded just as completely as the Herodians were. Jesus spoke with authority no man could match. No man ever spake like this man.

Friends, are you familiar with the story of Job's debate with his three friends. Each of them thought they could do better convincing Job his suffering was entirely the result of his sins than the others had done. None of them were successful. It is the same with the groups coming to Jesus this time. Each was certain they could catch him in a trap. None of them would prove successful.

Mat 22:33 And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.

Mat 22:34 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

Mat 22:35 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

Mat 22:36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Mat 22:37 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.

Mat 22:38 This is the first and great commandment.

Mat 22:39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Mat 22:40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

The Pharisees picked out a lawyer from their midst. This was not a lawyer who dealt with civil lawsuits as we might think of a lawyer today. This was a man who had studied the law of Moses and was considered to be an authority on it. The question this time was, "Which is the greatest commandment in the law?"

The lawyer had some hidden reason for asking the question. If Jesus had picked out any one of the ten commandments, I am persuaded the lawyer was ready to find fault with his choice. No doubt, he had prepared his case with great care and was ready to pounce on Christ with little mercy.

He did not get the chance. Jesus dug far deeper into the matter than the lawyer had ever dreamed. According to Jesus, the greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all of your heart, soul and mind. The next most important is to love your neighbor as yourself. In back of every one of the ten commandments is this backbone. Woven through every divine prophecy was this same love for God and man.

Neither the lawyer or those Pharisee friends of his had much love for the commandments of God, or for the welfare of their fellowman. Their trap had

not been any more successful than the Herodians or the Saducees.

Mat 22:41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

Mat 22:42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.

Mat 22:43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

Mat 22:44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

Mat 22:45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

Mat 22:46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions

Jesus then returned their fire by asking a question of his own, “What think ye of Christ, Whose Son is he?” Jesus was not necessarily asking them what they thought of him. He knew they did not accept him as the Christ, or anointed one which was to come. He was asking them whose descendant they believed the Christ would be according to the scriptures. They answered that the Christ would be the son of David.

Jesus then put them on the spot. David himself had called the coming Messiah “Lord.” If David had called him Lord, as he did in Psalm 110:1, how could he be David’s son. The answer, of course, is that Jesus is both the son, or descendant of David,

and also the Son of God. He was born of Mary who was a descendant of David. She conceived through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit which made Jesus also the Son of God.

We can add the Pharisees to the Herodians and the Saducees as having been caught in their own trap.

The Bible states that,

No man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions (Matt. 22:46).

Dear friends, outwitting either the Son of God, or his Father in heaven is not a wise thing to try. The Jews had given it their best shot. The result would be that God Almighty, the Great King, would reject them and offer his invitation to the Gentiles.

Chapter 23

Mat 23:1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,

Mat 23:2 Saying The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:

Mat 23:3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

Mat 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

Jesus Christ has two quite different descriptions. He is at times called the Lamb of God. He was led to the cross of Calvary as a lamb, dumb before the shearer. But at other times, he could be the roaring lion of Judah. It is as the Lion of Judah we will see him in our study today.

Remember, my friends, God had prepared for centuries in order that the kingdom of heaven might be introduced to the world. Many of the prophets had been killed by those who should have listened. Even John the baptist, who had the task of calling on the people to prepare the way of the Lord, had been beheaded. Jesus, himself had now spent a little over three years teaching and working miracles. There was no room for excuses. The longsuffering of God was being stretched to the breaking point.

The Lord will speak some of the most scorching words ever uttered as he pours out his condemnation upon the religious leaders who have turned blind eyes and deaf ears to the truth. These words are

quite in order. The callousness of the Pharisees is unbelievable. Jesus is making a gigantic effort to pierce through their hardened hearts in order that they might be healed.

The Lord began by telling his disciples to take note of the difference between what the Jewish leaders were preaching, and what they were actually doing. There was a terrible difference.

The scribes and Pharisees pretended to sit in the seat of Moses. By this, the Lord meant that they tried to establish their authority by saying they were preaching what Moses preached. When this was true and they did preach the truth as Moses had delivered it, they deserved to be heard. Remember Jesus is still alive at this time and the law of Moses is still in effect. The Jews were bound by it.

The problem was that although many of the things that were being preached were true, the scribes and Pharisees did not back up their words with deeds. They expected others to pay attention to their words, but they considered themselves to be a special class with a right to ignore the same things they taught others to obey.

Mat 23:5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

Mat 23:6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

Mat 23:7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

Mat 23:8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

Religious people are all too often able to be taken advantage of. If a smooth talker comes along, he or she may be able to make life easy for themselves while laying grievous burdens upon those who listen to them. People will make great sacrifices for God. When unscrupulous gainsayers come along, these profiteers can feather their own nest at the expense of sincere and godly persons. The leaders of the Jews had been doing that.

The Lord pointed out a major problem when he said all the works these hypocrites did were in order that they might be seen by men and be given great honor. They wore special garments which called attention to themselves. They always sought out the chief seats at the synagogue services and at the Jewish feasts. They also loved to be met in the market place with the title “Rabbi.”

It is permissible for men to be teachers provided they do not place their teaching above that of the Word of God. In fact, God has commanded Christians to teach all nations. But, these egotistic persons were adding to, subtracting from and modifying the Word of God as though they were the source of all truth. The Godhead is the ultimate source of truth. When we are speaking of religious truth, men can only teach that which God has revealed.

Mat 23:9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in

heaven.

Mat 23:10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

Mat 23:11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

Mat 23:12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Jesus warned them to call no man “Father.” It should be clear that he did not say we are wrong in calling our father in the flesh father. His point was that there is a Father in heaven from which all life originates. It is a deadly mistake for any man to speak of himself as if he were the giver of life. It is just as deadly for a listener to see another man as the fountain of spiritual life. Paul spoke of Timothy as his son through the gospel of Christ. However, that was only because Paul had planted the truth in his heart and it had brought forth a new man. Paul would have been horrified for any man to think he was placing himself in the place of the Father in heaven.

Jesus then gave the secret of true greatness. The man who would be truly great must become a servant. It is not being served that makes one great; it is serving.

Here is where Jesus turns from the multitude to address the scribes and Pharisees directly. There comes a time when gentleness and tact have not been enough. When that time arrives shock treatment sometimes brings results. Jesus decided that time had come as far as his enemies are concerned. And

so the Lion of Judah began to roar.

Mat 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Mat 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Mat 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

The Master accuses them of not only failing to enter into the kingdom of heaven themselves, but of preventing others from entering. Because they are guilty of running people off rather than inviting them into the Kingdom, Christ says *Woe be unto you*.

The words are still in order today. There are those who are willing to destroy the souls of other men in order to gain prestige and power for themselves. They will have to answer to God for such attitudes. In another place Jesus said offenses will come, but woe be the man who causes them. It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he be cast into the sea.

Another woe is pronounced upon these hypocrites

because they devour widow's houses. How could they devour a widow's house? They could do so by requiring the widow to make religious donations which would leave her absolutely destitute and would allow the hypocrite to live in luxury.

Another woe is declared for the sin of scouring the area for proselytes, or converts, and then causing the converts to be even more hypocritical than the one who converted him. They were not converting men to God. They were converting them to their own corrupt religious system.

Mat 23:16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

Mat 23:17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

Mat 23:18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

Mat 23:19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

Mat 23:20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

Mat 23:21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

Mat 23:22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him

that sitteth thereon.

Mat 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Mat 23:24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

The next condemnation was that the scribes and Pharisees had their priorities mixed up. They were arguing about whether they should swear by the temple, or by the gold of the temple and whether they should swear by the altar, or by the gift placed upon the altar. These were unimportant matters. They were so absorbed in such small things they had completely ignored the most important things such as judgment, mercy and faith.

Do you see what they were doing. They might have a patch of mint. They would be very careful to harvest a tenth of the mint crop and offer it. At the same time, a poor widow might be starving and they would still expect her to offer a sacrifice which she could not afford.

Jesus said they certainly should have offered their tithes of mint, anise and cummin. But that did not excuse them from paying attention to the needs of the poor and the abuse of the weak. He accused them of straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. Let us be careful that we do not fall into similar pitfalls today.

Mat 23:25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

Mat 23:26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Mat 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

Mat 23:28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Mat 23:29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

Mat 23:30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

Mat 23:31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

Mat 23:32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

Mat 23:33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Mat 23:34 Wherefore, behold, 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:

Mat 23:35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

Mat 23:36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

Mat 23:37 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!

Mat 23:38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

Mat 23:39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The next criticism was that the Pharisees had taken great pains to appear pure and beautiful on the outside. But they had failed to clean up the soul on the inside. They were like cups and saucers which had been cleaned and polished in the area which could be seen, yet were moldy and filthy on the parts that could not be seen.

Jesus is not excusing filth and dirt on the outside. There are some today who would like to worship God in dirty and torn clothes when they have neat and clean clothing which they could have worn. They are attempting to prove God sees the

inside rather than the outside. I would say to them, much the same things as Jesus said to these men. You ought to pay attention to the cleanliness of the outer man. However, the outer man can never be truly clean until the inner man is clean.

One of the clearest pictures our Lord ever painted is the one Jesus uttered when he said, *Your house is left unto you desolate*. At the time he spoke these words he was either near or in the temple. This was the house of God. The Pharisees had turned it into a house of thieves and robbers. They had filled it with hypocrisy and sin. Therefore, Jesus called it their house rather than God's house. He prophesied that it would be made into a desolate place. A little over thirty years later, this happened as the Romans took the city and destroyed the temple.

He then promised that some day men would call the one who came in the name of the Lord blessed. It seems clear that this had primary reference to Christ. However, it could just as well be true of those who accept Christ as Lord and wear his name by being called Christians.

Chapter 24

Mat 24:1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

Mat 24:2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Mat 24:3 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.

As the twenty-third chapter of Matthew closed, Jesus had prophesied that Jerusalem had terrible times ahead because of the rejection of his teaching. He was speaking of the beautiful temple of God when he said, *Your house is left unto you desolate.*

As chapter twenty-four begins, the disciples came to him and pointed out the buildings of the temple. They clearly had difficulty in accepting what he had said about it becoming desolate. Jesus replied that there would come a time when the stones in the temple buildings would be thrown down. The destruction would be so great there would not be one stone left standing upon another.

They moved across the valley to the Mount of Olives and the disciples ask the Lord a three pronged question.

When shall these things be?

What shall be the sign of thy coming?

What shall be the sign of the end of the world?

As the disciples asked the questions it is evident that they believed all three of these things would happen at the same time. To them, any disaster which would lay the temple stones strewn across the ground must mean the return of Christ in judgment at the end of the world.

Mat 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

Mat 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Mat 24:6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Mat 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

Mat 24:8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

As Jesus answers their question, we will see him dealing with all three of the questions. But he deals with them one at a time. Some of what he says in this chapter will deal with the destruction of the temple of God in 70 A.D. at the hands of the Romans. Other parts of the chapter deal with his return and with the end of the world.

The Master began by informing his listeners that

many awesome things would occur before the end of the world. There would be a number of deceivers arise saying they were the returning Christ. Many would be deceived into believing them.

Other things which would be mistaken as signs of his return would be wars, famines, disease epidemics, and earthquakes. They were not to become excited and take those events as signs of his coming. They were only minor sorrows when compared to the end of the world.

Before the end came Jesus disciples would be arrested and killed for preaching the gospel. They would be hated in every nation of the world because of the truths they taught. Many of Jesus own followers would lose faith in him. They would hate each other and betray one another. False prophets would arise and deceive many of them until the love and warmth they once had for the Lord would turn cold.

Mat 24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

Mat 24:10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

Mat 24:11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

Mat 24:12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

Mat 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Mat 24:14 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.

The temptation would be great for every disciple of Jesus Christ. However, those who endured all of the trials and tribulations without denying him in word or deed would be saved.

Before the end of the world, the gospel (or good news) of the kingdom would be preached in every nation of the earth. Only after every nation had the opportunity to hear the witness of Christ's death, burial and resurrection would the world end.

Everything Jesus had said up to this point can be referred to the end of the old heaven and the earth. Beginning with verse fifteen, he will narrow his attention to the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. One of the questions he was asked was, How will we know when the temple will be destroyed? He will now answer that question.

Mat 24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

Mat 24:16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

Mat 24:17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

Mat 24:18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

Mat 24:19 And woe unto them that are

with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

Mat 24:20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

Mat 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Mat 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Mat 24:23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

Mat 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Mat 24:25 Behold, I have told you before.

Mat 24:26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

Mat 24:27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Long ago, Daniel the prophet had warned of an abomination of desolation. Daniel had lived in Babylon during the seventy years of captivity of the people of God in that land. When the seventy years was up Daniel asked about the release of the people. The angel Gabriel came and explained

some of the events of the future. The angel went much farther than Daniel had expected. One of the things he spoke of was an abomination of desolation which would have something to do with the city of Jerusalem and the temple of God. Here are the words of Daniel 9:27 and 12:11.

DAN 9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

DAN 12:11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

As Jesus spoke to his disciples, he pointed out that the abomination of desolation mentioned by Daniel was still in the future. He advised that when they saw the abomination of desolation stand in the holy place they would know the destruction of the temple was at hand. Mark's account of these events is much like that of Matthew. But, if we turn to the twenty-first chapter of Luke, we find help in understanding the abomination of desolation.

Luke 21:20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

More than one time since the words of Jesus were spoken, the city of Jerusalem has been surrounded with armies. But there can be no doubt that Jesus was speaking of the Roman armies which came upon the city thirty some years after his death. They left the temple devastated and it is said the Roman general Titus had a plow pulled from one end of the temple area to the other to indicate how completely it had been demolished.

Jesus predicted the anguish of those days would be unbearable. His followers should quickly flee to the nearby mountains. They should not even take the time to gather up their clothing. Women with nursing infants would be in the greatest of trouble. They should pray that this not happen in the difficult days of winter, or on the Sabbath when they had been limited in how far they were to travel. The tribulation would be worse than the world had ever seen up to that time. If it continued for a long period of time, all men would die. But it would be cut short for the sake of the followers of the Lord.

Mat 24:28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Mat 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Mat 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all

the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Mat 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Again Jesus spoke of false Christs and false prophets crying out that Christ had returned. They would even demonstrate such signs and wonders as to deceive some of the disciples. Some would say Christ is in the desert. Some would say he is hidden in secret chambers. They were not to believe these false prophets. When Christ returns it will be known to everyone rather than to take place secretly. It will be like looking at the lightning that lights up the entire heavens from one side of the sky to the other.

Then the Lord said, *For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* The eagle was the emblem of the Roman armies. The carcase was the Jewish nation and their defiled temple.

Jesus stated that immediately after this tribulation the sun would be darkened, the moon would not give light and stars would fall from heaven. The powers of heaven would be shaken. I believe this is figurative language. The sun, moon and stars are probably the rulers of the Jewish nation. The fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple marked the end of the Jewish nation.

It would be replaced by the kingdom of heaven. It had actually been an imposter from A.D. 33 when the church, or kingdom of God, was established.

Only after these things would the Christ return. Any who looked for him before the destruction of Jerusalem would be in error. Only then could they start looking for the end of the world.

When the end of the world arrived all the tribes of the earth would see him coming in power and great glory. There would be a great trumpet sound and the angels would gather up his followers from every part of the earth. There would be no doubt or secrets about Christ's coming. Everyone would know he had arrived. And things would happen quickly.

Mat 24:32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

Mat 24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

Mat 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Mat 24:35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Mat 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Then Jesus informed them they should watch for the gathering of the Roman armies as a sign the abomination of desolation was nearby. As they knew

summer was near when the fig tree put forth leaves, they could know the temple was to be destroyed when the Roman armies gathered around it. And those events were to take place in the lifetime of some of those who listened to him.

At verse thirty-five, the Lord began to answer the part of their question about how they could know ahead of time when he would return. His reply was that his word would not pass away, but that heaven and earth would pass away. His word had been given to this effect and it would take place.

Mat 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Mat 24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

Mat 24:39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Mat 24:40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Mat 24:41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Mat 24:42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Mat 24:43 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.

Mat 24:44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Mat 24:45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

Nevertheless, no one would know when Christ would return. Men would be as surprised as evil men were in the time of Noah when the flood came.

People who were working side by side would find God had gathered up one of them as wheat for his garners, while the other would be left as chaff for the fires of hell.

Therefore, they must watch constantly and be prepared at all times for the coming of the Son of man. He would come in an hour when he was not expected. They need not look for a sign ahead of time. There would be none.

Mat 24:46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Mat 24:47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

Mat 24:48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

Mat 24:49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

Mat 24:50 The lord of that servant shall

come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

Mat 24:51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Through the remainder of this chapter and the entire twenty-fifth chapter Jesus warned his disciples to be constantly prepared for his return. Several parables are told to get his point across.

The first of these parables tells of two servants. Their master has gone away. Neither of them knows when his master will return. One of them is faithful and wise. When his master returns home without notice, he is found ready. The master compliments him highly and gives him even greater responsibilities. The other servant is irresponsible. He eats and drinks with the drunkards. He beats his fellow servants. He goes about life as if his master will never return.

When the master does return unexpectedly, he cuts that servant off from his household. He appoints for him a portion with the hypocrites in a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Dear reader, do you have any doubt about the identity of the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is hell. Jesus has come into the world to lead men back to the presence of God where there is no sorrow, pain or tears. He has gone now to prepare a place for those who desire to be with him. Those who are not wise and faithful, and who are

Chapter 25

In the twenty-third chapter of Matthew the Lord used some of the harshest language possible as he accused the Pharisees of selfishness and hypocrisy. Over and over again he said, Woe be unto you! At the end of the chapter he told them the temple of God would be left desolate because of their unbelief. He followed this in chapter twenty-four by answering three questions about the future. First, When would the temple be destroyed? Second, What would be the sign of his return in judgment? Third, What would be the sign of the end of the world?

Christ answered that when they saw the Roman armies surrounding Jerusalem they would know the temple was about to be destroyed. However, they need not look for a sign that he was returning in judgment. There would not be any sign like that. They must continue to be ready at all times.

Chapter twenty-four closed with the parable of the two servants. One was wise and remained ready for the return of his master. He was commended and rewarded when his master came. The other was irresponsible and was unprepared when the master arrived. He was removed from his duties and severely punished. Chapter twenty-five will be given entirely to a discussion of getting ready for the judgment with its rewards and punishments.

Mat 25:1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

Mat 25:2 And five of them were wise, and

five were foolish.

Mat 25:3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

Mat 25:4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

Mat 25:5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

Mat 25:6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

Mat 25:7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

Mat 25:8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

Mat 25:9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

Mat 25:10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

Mat 25:11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

Mat 25:12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

Mat 25:13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

There are three distinct illustrations of the main lesson. The first is the parable of the wise and

foolish virgins. The second is the parable of the talents. The third is a description of the judgment. We will take them in order.

There were ten virgins who went forth to meet the bridegroom of an approaching wedding. It is safe to assume, since these virgins went out to meet him, that they were interested in sharing in the joy of the wedding party. That tells me they were religious persons. Jesus had been dealing in particular with the Jewish leaders who had shown they were not ready to meet him in judgment. It is likely that the virgins at least include the Jews. The application is much wider. Any person who expects to enjoy the return of the Lord had better make careful preparation.

Five of the ten virgins were wise. They had filled their lamps with oil. The other five were foolish and had overlooked the need for a plenteous supply of fuel for their lamps.

Now, if the bridegroom had come when he was expected, all ten of the virgins would have had a sufficient supply of oil. The fact of the matter is that the bridegroom did **not** come when he was expected. Jesus was continuing to teach the unexpectedness of his return.

When the bridegroom delayed his coming longer than was expected, the supply of oil in the lamps of the foolish virgins ran out. They quickly cried out for oil from those who had prepared. It was hopeless. They missed the joy of the wedding, just as many who are unprepared today will close out their lives unprepared to meet the bridegroom for the heavenly marriage of the Lamb of God.

Jesus then added that

Ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Once again, note that there will be no sign ahead of time that one has a year or a day to get ready.

The point of the lesson is – Stay ready!

Mat 25:14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

Mat 25:15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

Mat 25:16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

Mat 25:17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

The second illustration used by Christ was the parable of the talents. This time a man who had servants traveled away into a distant country. He called his servants together and gave each of them certain goods. One received five talents. Another received two talents. A third received only one talent. The man then left on his journey.

We are probably justified again in thinking first of the neglect of the Jews to use the wonderful blessings God had placed in their hands over the years. God had carried them on eagles wings for centuries. They had many miracles performed to feed and protect them. They had the law and the prophets to teach them. Yet, they were ungrateful and unprepared when John the baptist and Jesus cried out, “*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*”

But we must also remember that it was the disciples own interest in the end of the world which had inspired Jesus to speak on the topic. His words were directed to them as well as to the Jews as a whole. And they were also directed to us. All of us have been entrusted with talents. Let’s explore the parable farther.

The man who was given ten talents went out and doubled his money. The one who had been given five talents also doubled his money. But the one who had been given only one talent buried his in the ground where it did nothing.

Mat 25:18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.

Mat 25:19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

Mat 25:20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

Mat 25:21 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.

Mat 25:22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

Mat 25:23 His lord said unto him, Well done, 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.

When the master returned home, he asked each of the three servants what they had accomplished. The servant with the ten talents was commended for gaining more talents and was promoted to greater responsibility. This was also true of the servant who had received five talents. Both of them were told that since they had been faithful over a few things, they would be made ruler of many things. Each was told to enter into the joys of his lord.

The lesson of the Lord is clear. When he has placed talent and opportunities in the hands of his servants, he expects them to be used to the fullest. When they are used in that way, he is pleased and the faithful servant will be rewarded with commendation and greater opportunities.

One of the things we cannot help but ponder is whether the greater opportunities will be found in heaven after the judgment. It is pleasing to think that the faithful servant may be rewarded with

eternal opportunities according to the works done on earth with the talents provided here. This lesson also is not just for the Jews or the disciples. It is for every servant of the Lord in every age.

Mat 25:24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

Mat 25:25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

Mat 25:26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

Mat 25:27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Mat 25:28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

Mat 25:29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

Mat 25:30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Mat 25:31 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:

Our parable is not finished. There was a third servant who buried his talent. He had but one and was afraid of losing that one. When the master returned he found the servant had not made proper use of that which had been placed in his stewardship. He scolded him and took away the one talent from him. The servant was told he should have put the talent to work. He was cast into outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It would be wrong for us to pity the one talent man because he did not have as many talents as the other two. The point of the parable is that regardless of the amount of talent and opportunity one receives, he or she must make full use of that which has been provided for him. The Jews had failed miserably in using the many blessings God had given them. They were not prepared when the Kingdom of God was established on the day of Pentecost. The thousands who responded at that time were but a small percent of the entire Jewish population. Because of their neglect of the talents provided for them, the city of Jerusalem was to be made desolate and the temple would be destroyed.

The lesson is for us also. The person who is a faithful steward will be provided further opportunities for service. The one who buries his talent will lose the opportunities he once had. **Get ready for the**

judgment, and stay ready, regardless of the amount of talent you possess.

Mat 25:32 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:

Mat 25:33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Mat 25:34 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:

Mat 25:35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Mat 25:36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Mat 25:37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

Mat 25:38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Mat 25:39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

Mat 25:40 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.

The last of the three illustrations in this twenty-

fifth chapter of Matthew is a picture of the judgment when Christ returns. This is the time when the door will be shut. There will be no more time. The eternal rewards and punishments will be assigned to each and every man who ever lived or who ever will live.

This is an awesome time. It is that time which the disciples were asking about earlier. It is the time of the end of the world and of the coming of the Son of man. Jesus had spent considerable time in his Olivet discourse getting to this part of it. He is now ready to describe what it will be like when the Son of man does return. It will be the great and final day of the Lord.

Jesus will come in all of his glory. It will be quite a contrast to his coming as a helpless babe in the time of Herod. At that time he had left the glory of heaven to take upon himself the form of a servant. He allowed himself to be clothed in flesh and bone. He became the Son of man.

Even when he departed from the disciples and ascended into the clouds of heaven, as recorded in Acts 1, he was not enveloped in the glory which he will have when he returns. Then, the trumpet of the archangel will sound. The dead shall arise, and the Lord shall appear in the clouds as when he departed. However, this time it will be without sin. It will be in the glory of heaven.

He will not be alone. The angels of heaven will be with him. It will be time for them to reap the earth. God's harvest will have grown to his satisfaction and the wheat will be ready for separation from the chaff and the tares.

All of the nations of the earth shall be gathered before him as the Lord sits upon his throne ready for the separation of the good from the evil. They have been allowed to grow together until this time. Good men will have wondered why God allowed the presence of suffering and wickedness. But now, the answer will be given.

Mat 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Mat 25:42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

Mat 25:43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Mat 25:44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

Mat 25:45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

Mat 25:46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

In the sixth chapter of Revelation the martyrs who were beheaded for their testimony of the truth asked how long it would be before God would take

vengeance upon them that destroy the earth. The answer was that they must put on their white robes and wait. In his own good time, God would attend to the matter. That good time arrives in the judgment. The cleansing will take place.

Rev 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.

Rev 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

Rev 6:11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

One group of persons will be assembled at the right hand of the Christ. The other will find themselves gathered on the left hand. A far different message will be heard by the two groups.

On the left hand will be the goats. They cared for no one other than themselves. They neglected the poor, the sick, the prisoners and the hungry. These are the stubborn and independent souls who have proved throughout their lifetime they had no desire to conform to the will of the Father. They made every attempt to avoid righteousness and purity. They were determined to get as far from God as they could.

They will be given their wish. They will be told to *depart from ye workers of iniquity. I never knew you.* They will be sent away into everlasting punishment where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

On the right hand will be the sheep. They are those who, in meekness and obedience, sought out the divine will of the Godhead. They will have spent their lifetime in demonstrating their desire to draw close to that which is pure and holy. They will have loved their brethren and sisters in Christ and will have been unselfish in their attitudes. They will have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and visited the sick.

The words spoken to them will be the exact opposite of those spoken to the goats. This time, the message will be, *Come ye blessed of my Father. Enter into the joys of thy Lord.*

Which of the two phrases will you hear my friend?

Depart from me.

or

Come ye blessed.

Blank

Chapter 26

Mat 26:1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,

Mat 26:2 Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

Mat 26:3 Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

Mat 26:4 And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.

Mat 26:5 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

The twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew is a very busy chapter. Events unfold one after the other in rapid succession. It seems chaotic at first glance. However, the closer one looks, the more it becomes clear that Jesus is in complete control. It will be mankind on trial rather than the Saviour of the world. Jesus came into the world in order that he might show man absolute unselfishness. Now he was ready to demonstrate it by dying for us. He himself said, *No greater love hath a man than that he give his life for his friends.* He will go even farther. He will give his life for his enemies. In this chapter the time is drawing near.

As the chapter begins, Jesus informed his disciples that he would die two days later on the Passover. Several times before, he had told them of his coming death, burial and resurrection. Now

he went one step farther and told them the exact day.

It is no accident that Jesus was to die on the day of the Passover feast. Remember that the Passover began with the slaying of a lamb and the sprinkling of its blood on the doorframes of the houses of the Israelites. When the destroyer took the firstborn of the Egyptians, the blood of the lamb saved those in the houses of the Israelites. Through the long centuries the Passover Feast memorialized that event and pointed to the time when Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, would provide his blood for the remission of sins in the Christian age. The Passover looked forward to the crucifixion of Christ. The Lord's Supper today looks back to that same event.

The chief priests, the scribes and the elders of the Jews then assembled to carry out his murder. They wanted to do so as fast as possible, but decided not to take him on the day of the Passover Feast because it might produce an uproar among the people who considered him a great prophet. It is interesting that even though they decided to avoid the Passover Feast day, that is precisely when the death took place. God was in control, not the Pharisees.

Mat 26:6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

Mat 26:7 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.

Mat 26:8 But when his disciples saw it, they

had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

Mat 26:9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

Mat 26:10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

Mat 26:11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

Mat 26:12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

Mat 26:13 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.

The next event in the chapter took place in the home of a leper named Simon in the town of Bethany. We do not know that Simon had leprosy at the time Jesus was there. It could be that he was a former leper whom Jesus had cleansed. At any rate, while the Lord was there, a woman came with an alabaster box of precious ointment and poured it on the Lord's head as he sat eating. A similar account in the twelfth chapter of John indicates this may have been Mary, the sister of Lazarus. If you are a good student of the Bible, you may want to compare the two accounts and see if you think they are the same event, or two different events, taking place four days apart.

When the disciples saw what had happened Judas spoke first. He seemed to be concerned

about waste. Why had the ointment not been sold and the money used to relieve the poor? Actually, Judas was more interested in getting the money into the bag which he carried for the entire group. His statement about the poor was insincere.

Jesus replied that the woman had done something very important. They would be able to care for the poor for many years to come. But they would not have Jesus with them for long. Without knowing what she was doing, the woman was preparing his body for the burial which was just ahead. The devotion of the woman would be carried around the world throughout the ages, wherever his death was preached. We are living proof of the truth of Jesus words.

Mat 26:14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

Mat 26:15 And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

Mat 26:16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Judas Iscariot was extremely unhappy. He went to the chief priests and asked them what they would offer him to deliver Christ to them. They offered him thirty pieces of silver. Judas agreed and from that time on, he looked for an opportunity to earn his evil wages.

Mat 26:17 Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

Mat 26:18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

Mat 26:19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

Mat 26:20 Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

Mat 26:21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

Mat 26:22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

Mat 26:23 And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

Mat 26:24 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.

Mat 26:25 Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

As the Passover drew near, Jesus told his disciples to go into Jerusalem. There they would find

a certain man. They were to tell him the Master would keep the Passover at his house. Preparations were made to meet in an upper room and take the Passover there.

As they were eating, Jesus announced that one of those present would betray him. All of them began to ask the question, "Is it I?" Jesus very clearly indicated which of them it would be by saying it was the one who was dipping into the same dish as he was. He also added that it would be better for that man if he had not been born.

Judas knew very well that it was him. To cover himself, he said, "*Is it I?*" Jesus answered him, "*Thou hast said.*" This was the same as saying, "Yes Judas, It is you." At that point, according to John 13:30, Judas left the group and went out into the night.

Mat 26:26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

Mat 26:27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

Mat 26:28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Mat 26:29 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.

Jesus proceeded to institute the Lord's Supper. He took bread and blessed and broke it. He said, "*This is my body.*" Then he took the cup and said, "*This is my blood shed for many for the remission of sins.*" He declared that he would not eat that supper with them again until he did so in the Father's kingdom. Today, we eat and drink with him in the Father's kingdom every time we partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. He is our Passover today. They sang a hymn and left to go over the brook Kidron to the Mount of Olives a short distance outside Jerusalem.

Mat 26:30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

Mat 26:31 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

Mat 26:32 But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Mat 26:33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

Mat 26:34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Mat 26:35 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

Jesus then made another prediction. He said all of the disciples would be offended and turn back in fulfillment of the prophecy that the Shepherd would be smitten and his sheep scattered.

Zec 13:7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

Peter was horrified. Indignantly, he replied that though everyone else forsook, he would never forsake Jesus. The rest of the disciples agreed that they would also remain true. All of them, including Peter, would find, before the night was over, they were much weaker than they realized.

Mat 26:36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

Mat 26:37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

Mat 26:38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

Mat 26:39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemene. This garden was on the slope of the Mount of Olives. It is difficult today to be sure one is looking at many of the places mentioned in the New Testament when the guides point them out. I believe that is not the case with the Garden of Gethsemene. I have seen the Garden of Gethsemene. One can be certain he is very near the location, if not at it.

Mat 26:40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

Mat 26:41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Mat 26:42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

Mat 26:43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

Mat 26:44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

Mat 26:45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Mat 26:46 Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and went into the garden to pray. The three were left and Jesus went on alone where he prayed by himself. Three times he prayed that if there were any other way, he might be delivered from the coming cup of suffering. Each time, he added, "*Not my will, but thine, be done.*"

Three times Jesus returned from praying to find the three disciples asleep. The first two times he woke them and returned to pray again. The third time he said, "*Sleep on—the hour is at hand. The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.*"

Mat 26:47 And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

Mat 26:48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

Mat 26:49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

Mat 26:50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus and took him.

Mat 26:51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

Mat 26:52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Mat 26:53 **Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?**

Mat 26:54 **But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?**

Mat 26:55 **In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.**

Mat 26:56 **But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.**

Before Jesus finished speaking, Judas came from the chief priests with a multitude of soldiers, carrying swords and staves. He had agreed that he would kiss the Lord to indicate which was the one they were to arrest. He then kissed Christ and the soldiers arrested him. Some wonder why the soldiers would not have known Christ without the kiss of Judas. The answer is probably that it was night and although Judas would know him in those conditions, the soldiers would not.

Simon Peter was ready to make good on his promise not to betray Christ. He took a sword and swung it at one of the servants of the high priest. His aim was not perfect. He cut off the man's ear. Jesus then healed the man's ear and reprimanded Peter. Peter was told to put up his sword. Those that lived by the sword would die by the sword.

If Jesus had wanted to use force he could have called upon thousands of angels to defend him. These

things were being allowed in order that prophecy might be fulfilled. One of the prophecies would have been that of Isaiah 53:7, in which he was to go to his death as a lamb dumb before the shearer.

Isa 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

The Lord turned to the mob and asked them why they came with swords and staves now. Why had they not taken him when he was in the temple teaching? The answer to that was that they were afraid of the people. The darkness of night was their way of hiding.

Mat 26:57 And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

Mat 26:58 But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

Jesus was taken to the palace of Caiaphas where the scribes and elders had gathered. This was against the Jewish law. They should have waited until the next day. But, breaking the law was not their greatest concern. Killing Jesus was.

Mat 26:59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against

Jesus, to put him to death;

Mat 26:60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

Mat 26:61 And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

Mat 26:62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?

Mat 26:63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

Mat 26:64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Mat 26:65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

Mat 26:66 What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.

Mat 26:67 Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,

Mat 26:68 Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?

They needed witnesses to some crime Jesus had

committed which would justify having him destroyed. Since Jesus was sinless, they found it impossible. Finally, they found two men who testified that Jesus had said he could reconstruct the temple in three days if it were destroyed. They had twisted his teaching about the temple of his body being raised from the grave in three days if it were killed.

Jesus was asked if he had any reply. He remained silent. Then the high priest asked him if he was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus answered, "*Thou hast said.*" It was the same as saying, "Yes, I am the Christ, the Son of God." Not only did Jesus admit he was the Son of God, he added that the time would come when men would see him coming with power from the clouds of heaven. He was to be king of the universe, sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

The high priest flew into a frenzy. There was no need to get witnesses. Christ had blasphemed by presenting himself as the Son of God, and the Christ of prophecy.

And so they concluded there was justification for killing him. This would not be done with dignity. It would be the most degrading experience they could make of it. They would prove he was an imposter by reducing him to the status of a murderer and a thief.

They spit in his face. My friends, have you ever had someone spit in your face. I have not. But I can just begin to imagine what it would be like to have the saliva running down across my eyes, my cheeks and dripping off my chin. Remember, this was not a vile criminal. This was the holy, pure,

sinless Son of God. Yet, he took it all for you and I. They beat upon him with their fists and slapped him with open palms. And then they mocked him by crying out, *“Prophesy which of us it was who struck you.”*

Peter was just outside the palace. He dared not come in. What must have been going through his mind. If this is the Messiah, why did he tell me to put up my sword? Why does he not call the angels to help him? Why is he allowing himself to be degraded like this?

Mat 26:69 Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.

Mat 26:70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

Mat 26:71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

Mat 26:72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

Mat 26:73 And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.

Mat 26:74 Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.

Mat 26:75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock

crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

About that time, a young woman came along and recognized Peter as having been one of Christ's disciples. She asked him if she had not seen him with Jesus. Peter quickly denied knowing what she was talking about.

Along came a second maiden who also claimed to have seen Peter in the presence of the Lord. Again, Peter denied being a friend of Jesus. This time he took an oath that he was telling the truth.

By that time the entire crowd began to press in upon him. They could tell by the accent of his voice that he was a Galilean. Peter sensed that he might well meet the same fate as Jesus. He did not want to die. He began to curse and swear, and to declare he did not know the Lord. The cock then crew and Peter remembered Jesus had predicted just this. Peter went out and wept.

Chapter 27

Mat 27:1 When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:

Mat 27:2 And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

Mat 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

Mat 27:4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.

Mat 27:5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

The previous chapter told us about the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemene. The beating and mocking of the Lord was described. The chapter ended with Peter cursing and denying three times that he even knew the Christ.

The trial before Caiaphas had taken place during the night. It is morning as we enter chapter twenty-seven. The chief priests and the elders of the Jews have pronounced Jesus guilty of blasphemy because he claimed to be the Son of God and to be the prophesied Messiah. As we pick up the series of events, Jesus is being led to the Roman court to appear before Pontius Pilate, the governor. Before he and his disciples had entered into Jerusalem, Jesus

told his disciples this would happen. He had said he would be arrested and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. It is just as he said it would be.

How tragic it is that it was the chief priests and the elders of the people who pronounced the Lord guilty. These are the very persons who should have appreciated his deeds and his words more than anyone else. Pride and power were the moving forces in their hypocrisy.

Judas then realized the horror of what he had done. I believe he had no idea the Lord would be crucified when he agreed to deliver him to the Pharisees for thirty pieces of silver. After all, Judas had seen his Master work such wondrous miracles which proved that God was with him. Surely with that kind of assistance Jesus could overcome his enemies with ease. Judas did not know his Lord would allow himself to be taken as a lamb to the slaughter. His heart was torn with agony. His statement was, *I have betrayed innocent blood*. He took the thirty pieces of silver and tried to give them back to the chief priests and elders. They refused them saying, *What is that to us, see thou to that!*

Judas did not want the money. He threw it down on the floor of the temple and went out and hanged himself. His guilt was more than he could bear.

Mat 27:6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

Mat 27:7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers

in.

Mat 27:8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

Mat 27:9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;

Mat 27:10 And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

The chief priests and elders decided they could not put the money into the temple treasury because it was stained with the blood of a man. They took it and bought a field where those who did not have the means could be buried.

There are several prophecies fulfilled in the death of Christ. One of them is found in Jeremiah 18:1-4 and again in Zechariah 11:12-13. The exact amount of money is given and the purchase of the potter's field is mentioned.

Jer 18:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

Jer 18:2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

Jer 18:3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

Jer 18:4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

Zec 11:12 And I said unto them, If ye think

good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

Zec 11:13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

Mat 27:11 And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.

Mat 27:12 And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

Mat 27:13 Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?

Mat 27:14 And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

The scene returned to Pilate's court. As Jesus stood before Pilate, the governor asked him, *Art thou the King of the Jews?* Jesus replied, *Thou sayest.* Pilate and others would have understood Jesus to be agreeing that he was the King of the Jews.

These were serious words. The chief priests and elders now felt they had won the battle. They could never have had Jesus executed by the Romans for blasphemy against God. However, when he admitted to being the King of the Jews, this placed him in the position of competing for power with the Roman emperor. That was treason. That would get a man

killed.

Christ's enemies then railed against him with charge after charge. Pilate asked him if he had anything to say in reply to the things they were saying. Christ remained silent. It was clear that anything he said would fall upon deaf ears. Here is another prophecy fulfilled. Isaiah had said,

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth (Isa. 53:7).

Mat 27:15 Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.

Mat 27:16 And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.

Mat 27:17 Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

Mat 27:18 For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

Mat 27:19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

Pilate was so uncomfortable in the presence of the Son of God that he marvelled at his dignity. He did not wish to pronounce a death sentence.

There was a famous prisoner named Barrabas. Barrabas was doubly guilty. He was a murderer and was also truly guilty of treason. Pilate had the right to pardon one prisoner during the feast day. He decided he might have the answer. He would give them a choice. Which would they rather have pardoned, Barrabas or Christ? He asked them for their answer. Surely they would choose Christ for release rather than Barrabas!

In the meantime, Pilate's wife sent a message to him. She had had a nightmarish dream about Christ. This must have added even more difficulty to Pilate's problems. No doubt, he would have released Jesus, if it had not been for the viciousness of the chief priests and elders. They persuaded the multitude to ask for the release of Barabbas the murderer rather than Jesus. How evil can men become?

Pilate still clung to a slight hope that they might be satisfied with something less than the death of the cross. He asked what they thought he should do with the Lord. They cried out, *Let him be crucified.* Pilate still resisted, *What evil hath he done?* The crowd did not even give an answer to his question. Their only words were a louder cry, *Let him be crucified.*

Pilate was astonished. When he decided there was nothing he could do to quiet the outcry, he took a basin filled with water and washed his hands. He said, *I am innocent of the blood of this just person. See ye to it.* Then the people cried out *His blood be upon us and upon our children.*

It would be a difficult task to wash off blood of Jesus Christ from either Pilate or the Jews. The record shows that for some twenty centuries now Pilate has been associated with the sentencing of the Saviour to Calvary. The Jews of that day and the Jews of the days from then until today, are still known for their rejection of the Son of David. Perhaps some day many of the Jews will recognize the error of their ways and open their ears, and their hearts to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.

We must note the fickle nature of mankind. When Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem, the multitudes had proclaimed him as the Deliverer. He had healed the lepers, caused the blind to see and the deaf to hear. But now there were no more miracles. There was only the shame of the cross. How could they cry out for his murder such a short time after they had praised his name? Men do not see very far ahead.

Mat 27:20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

Mat 27:21 The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

Mat 27:22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

Mat 27:23 And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

Mat 27:24 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 ye to it.

Mat 27:25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

Mat 27:26 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

Barabbas was released from prison. Jesus was scourged and turned over to the soldiers to be crucified. They could do anything they pleased to him as they prepared to kill him.

We sometimes say children can be cruel when they tease other children. The things which happened to Jesus just before his death prove that adults can be even more cruel than children. Satan must have been engulfed in glee at what he saw as victory over God and his Son.

The few soldiers who had been in charge turned Christ over to a centurian band of one hundred soldiers. How silly! One angel from heaven could have delivered the Saviour from a hundred thousand of Caesar's soldiers. Jesus life was not taken from him. **He gave it!**

Mat 27:27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

Mat 27:28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

Mat 27:29 And when they had platted a

crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

Mat 27:30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

Mat 27:31 And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

Since Jesus had admitted he was the King of the Jews, they decided to make a mockery of that. They removed his own clothing and put a scarlet robe on him. A king should always wear a robe. Then they braided a crown made of thorns and pressed it down upon his forehead. The blood from the scourging must now have covered his back, and must have trickled down his face from the punctures made by the thorns. Yes, a king must have a crown!

They found a reed and put it in his right hand and then bowed before him, making fun. They hit him on the head, and spit upon him, ridiculing him, and saying, *Hail, King of the Jews*. My, what great fun that must have been!?

When they tired of their game, they took off the scarlet robe and put his own clothing back on him. They led him toward the place of the skull to finish their evil work.

Mat 27:32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they

compelled to bear his cross.

Mat 27:33 And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,

Mat 27:34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

Mat 27:35 And 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.

Mat 27:36 And sitting down they watched him there;

Mat 27:37 And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

On the way, Jesus stumbled with the cross and they required a man named Simon to carry the cross. It seems clear that Jesus had become too weak to carry it any farther. I am grateful to Simon.

They gave him vinegar to drink. Some believe the vinegar was a drink which dulled the pain. If so, Jesus refusal to drink it was another indication that he was suffering the pain of the cross because it was the will of God, and that he did it willingly for the sins of the world.

They nailed him to the cross and then sat at the foot of the cross casting lots for his clothing. I cannot help but wonder whether they had the compassion to leave him enough clothing to cover his

nakedness, or whether they stripped him completely and left him exposed to the gaze of every passerby. Artists pictures of him hanging on the cross always provide for a cover. It may not have been so.

They put a sign over his head saying, *This is the King of the Jews*. He was placed between two thieves. Those who passed by said, *He saved others, but he cannot save himself. If he is the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross. If he is the Son of God, let God deliver him*. Even the thieves began to join in the mocking, though one of them repented of his words a bit later.

Mat 27:38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

Mat 27:39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

Mat 27:40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

Mat 27:41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,

Mat 27:42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

Mat 27:43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

Mat 27:44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his

teeth.

Mat 27:45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

Mat 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Mat 27:47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, *This man calleth for Elias.*

Jesus was placed on the cross fairly early in the morning. By the sixth hour of the day, which was noon, darkness spread over the land until the ninth hour. For three hours it became dark in Palestine. when the sun was at its high point. For the moment the darkness had won.

During this darkness, Jesus cried with a loud voice, *Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani*. Translated into English, this means, *My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?* Jesus words were a quote from Psalm 22. For a brief time, because Jesus had taken upon himself the sins of the world, God had turned his face away. When God turns his face away darkness reigns.

The mockers at the foot of the cross could not have been more wrong. The Father was not going to save his Only Begotten Son because this was the avenue to salvation for lost sinners. His lack of action was not due to inability or absence of love. It was just the opposite. Jesus was allowed

to endure the death of the cross because God loved lost sinners so deeply.

Mat 27:48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

Mat 27:49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

Mat 27:50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

Mat 27:51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

Several events took place. Along with the darkness, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. That veil separated the holy place from the most holy place. Jesus was making a way for man to enter into the presence of the Father. The earth quaked and the rocks crumbled. After his resurrection graves were opened and men came out of the graves to walk the streets of the city of Jerusalem.

The centurion was impressed. He was the one who commanded the soldiers who mocked the Lord. Now he made the great confession. He said,

Truly, this was the Son of God.

Some of the women who had followed Christ stood afar off in sorrow. Women in general are more

emotionally sensitive than men. These women did not have the physical power to bring about Jesus release. All they could do was mourn over the things which were taking place.

When the evening had come, Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man came and begged for the body of Jesus. Pilate agreed and Joseph wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own tomb. A great stone was rolled before the entry of the tomb. The soldiers had been told make it as secure as possible, in order that no one could steal the body and claim that he had risen.

The chief priests and elders went to Pilate and asked that a guard be placed at the tomb to be certain his disciples did not come by night and steal the body so they could later claim that he rose from the dead. Pilate agreed. The stone was sealed. The Roman guard was put in place.

It must require an infinite love for the souls of men, to endure what God the Father and God the Son allowed just outside Jerusalem that dark day.

Mat 27:52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

Mat 27:53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

We wonder how the people knew those who were walking the streets of Jerusalem had come out of the graves. It is logical to believe that they

were able to recognize some of their friends and loved ones who had passed on. My friends, do you not think this would make an impression on the viewers?

Mat 27:54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

Mat 27:55 And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:

Mat 27:56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

Jesus still had a multitude of friends and followers. One whom we would least expect to make the confession that Jesus was truly the Son of God spoke out firmly that this was true. Those under his command joined him in the confession.

Several women are mentioned and some are identified. Mary Magdalene had been possessed by seven demons and Jesus cast them out and healed her. She did not forget that kindness. She was still there at his death. Jesus mother and also his mother's sister were present.

Mat 27:57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:

Mat 27:58 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded

the body to be delivered.

Mat 27:59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

Mat 27:60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

Jesus had said that not many rich men would enter into the kingdom of heaven. It would be harder for a rich man to get to heaven than it would for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Joseph of Arimathea was probably an exception. He had been a faithful disciple and even offered Christ his own tomb in which to be buried.

Mat 27:61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

We are not told who the other Mary was. Was it his mother? Was it Mary Magdalene? I leave the reader to decide. No doubt they were both grieving over the departure of one they loved so dearly.

Mat 27:62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,

Mat 27:63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

Mat 27:64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day,

lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.

The chief priests and Pharisees remembered very well that Jesus had said he would rise from the dead on the third day. This was the sign of Jonah that he had proclaimed. They were doing their utmost to insure that they would have no more embarrassment from this man who claimed to be both the Messiah and the Son of God. If the claim could be made that he had actually risen, they would face him forever.

Mat 27:65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.

Mat 27:66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

There is no way that man can build a prison so tight that Jesus Christ and his Father in heaven cannot escape from it. Even the gates of death cannot prevail over divine power. The evidences that Jesus had truly risen from the grave were to be emblazoned in the memories of over 500 persons to whom he appeared after his resurrection.

Chapter 28

Mat 28:1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

Mat 28:2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

Mat 28:3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

Mat 28:4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

Mat 28:5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

Mat 28:6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

The death of Christ was not good news. It was the most hideous event the world has ever witnessed. The burial of Christ left the disciples of the Lord confused and dismayed. It was certainly not good news. Yet, Paul defines the gospel as the death, the burial and the resurrection of Christ. The word gospel means **good news**. It is only when the death and burial of the Master is followed by his resurrection that the combination becomes good news. But when that is true, the news becomes the greatest news ever proclaimed.

As dawn came on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene and another Mary came to visit

the tomb of the Lord. They were bringing spices to anoint the body. As they approached they were wondering how they would be able to enter. The stone which had been rolled in front of the entrance was much too large for them to move. When they arrived they found an angel of the Lord had already rolled it back. He was there. His face was bright as lightning and his clothing white as snow. He was sitting upon the stone which he had removed.

The angel spoke to the women and told them not to be afraid. He knew they had come to find Jesus but he was not there. He had risen from the grave. He would show the women the place where Jesus had been lying. The women were told to go and tell his disciples he had risen from the dead. Jesus had already gone into Galilee. They would see him there.

Perhaps they did see him later in Galilee. But before they even came to where the disciples were, near Jerusalem, Jesus met them. They fell before his feet and worshipped him. Christ informed them they were to find the disciples and tell them to go to Galilee. He would meet them there. Remember Galilee was a number of miles north of Jerusalem. It was in Galilee that Jesus had chosen a number of his apostles.

Meanwhile, the Roman guard charged with preventing the theft of the body had become frantic. An earthquake had occurred and the body was gone. Their own lives were at stake. They could be executed for allowing the body to disappear. They went and told the chief priests and elders what had happened. The chief priests and elders gave them

a large sum of money to claim Jesus disciples had come while they were asleep and stolen the body.

This is amazing. They had been charged with seeing that this very thing did not happen. Now they were to go to their superiors and say it did happen. What is more, they were to say they had been asleep when it took place. You simply do not sleep when you are on a military guard duty. How did they escape death themselves? The chief priests and elders were to get to the governor and persuade him not to harm the guards.

Mat 28:7 And 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.

Mat 28:8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

The story still circulates that Jesus did not rise from the grave, but that he was removed by the disciples who then lied and said he had arisen. It is most interesting that the majority of the apostles died for their testimony of the risen Christ. Men do not lie in order that they may be killed. We do not have time to go into the various schemes men have invented to avoid admitting the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each has been met with solid evidence and has proved to be untrue. Christ truly arose from the grave. He is the Son of the Living God.

Mat 28:9 And as they went to tell his

disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

Mat 28:10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Mat 28:11 Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

Mat 28:12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,

Mat 28:13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.

Mat 28:14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

Mat 28:15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Mat 28:16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

The disciples then did as they had been told to do. They went north to the territory of Galilee. There was a mountain there where they had been told to meet the Lord.

Jesus met them as he had promised. Some of them worshipped him when they saw him. Others doubted. And so it is to this day. Some believe and some doubt. Regardless of the strength of the

evidence, there are those who reject it.

The book of Matthew does not include a record of all of the appearances of Christ. Later, when Paul wrote the fifteenth chapter of the first Corinthian letter, he gave a list of several of these appearances.

*1Cor. 15:3-8 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. **Yes, Jesus lives!***

Mat 28:17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Mat 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Mat 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Jesus then gave the great commission to his apostles. He said,

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:19-20).

We are usually impressed with the parting words of a loved one. They are especially meaningful to us. After over three years of teaching by both example and by word of mouth, Jesus poured out his heart in this commission. He would leave them. But they must continue the work which he had begun.

Unlike the charge given in the limited commission when he had said, Go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, he now commanded them to go preach to men of every nation.

There were to follow a three step pattern. First they were to teach. Then they were to baptize those who had been taught. Third, they were to continue teaching those who had been baptized.

There are those who downgrade the importance of baptism today. It ought not to be so. If we deny the importance of baptism, why not deny the importance of teaching. Both duties came in almost the same breath of the resurrected Lord. Mark put it this way.

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that

believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:15-16).

Have you been baptized for the remission of your sins? Don't ignore the command of Christ for another day.

We have followed the life of the Lord from his birth to his resurrection. We will close with a very brief summary of the greatest story ever told.

We began by searching through some of the Old Testament prophecies foretelling the coming of one who would be of the seed of Abraham, the seed of David, and who would at the same time be the Son of God. We saw how those prophecies were fulfilled in the birth of Christ. We emphasized the importance of Christ's humanity and his divinity. As the son of man and also the Son of God, Christ could present the supreme sacrifice for the sins of men, yet He could share in the trials and temptations which each of us face during our own stay on earth.

We saw how opposition arose immediately. Herod sought to kill the babe and his parents fled into Egypt. Later when Herod had died, they returned and the Lord spent his boyhood days in the village of Nazareth. He respected both his Father in heaven as well as Joseph and Mary who cared for him on earth.

At about thirty years of age, Jesus was baptized by John the baptist. He explained that this was done that he might fulfil all righteousness. At this time the Father spoke from heaven claiming him as the Son of God. The Holy Spirit descended upon him like as a dove, and Jesus was ready to begin his ministry.

He moved out into the wilderness and fasted for forty days and nights, after which the Devil tempted him. By using scripture, Jesus withstood each temptation. He was then qualified to command others to *“Follow me.”*

He began to preach that the Kingdom of heaven was at hand. He gathered a multitude on a mountain and taught them the nature of that kingdom and also the citizens of the kingdom. He contrasted the previous teachings which had been done by the Jewish elder and scribes with a new and more perfect way. Rather than simply refraining from killing another, they must also refrain from hating another. Rather than refraining from committing adultery, they must also refrain from even looking with lust. The citizens of Jesus new kingdom would be good on the inside, not just on the outside. He explained that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was not sufficient.

The Pharisees were not pleased. They began early to oppose him. This opposition grew until we find the Lord stretched out upon the cross of Calvary.

Jesus taught the Kingdom of heaven must come before all else. Selfish attitudes must disappear and be replaced with attitudes which produce good fruit. A man must love God with all his heart soul, mind and strength, and his neighbor as himself.

He performed many miracles, causing the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the lepers to be cleansed. He even brought the dead to life. Vast numbers of people gathered around him

and believed him to be a prophet of God. Some thought he could be the prophesied Messiah and Son of David.

The scribes and Pharisees denied this hotly. In order to teach those who were hungry for the truth, and at the same time allow those who wished to ignore him, Jesus taught in parables. At times the Pharisees were painfully aware that the parables condemned their selfish ways.

Jesus taught that the secret of true greatness was not found in human accomplishments or the honor paid by one's fellow man. True greatness was in service. He that would be greatest of all must become servant of all.

He practised what he preached. He took upon himself the form of a servant and became obedient unto the Father in heaven. That obedience led him to shed his blood upon the cross for the sins of men.

But he who descended from heaven has now risen from the grave and ascended into heaven. He has been given a name above every name. He is king of kings and Lord of lords. You may voluntarily bow the knee to him and confess his name today, or you may wait and be forced to do so in the judgment. Those who wait will hear those words of doom, **Depart from me, I never knew you.** Those who serve him today, will hear the words,

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**The Book Of
MARK**

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Author:

There is little discussion as to whether Mark was the author of this account of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Although he was not an eyewitness of everything he wrote, and was not an apostle, he was very close to the apostle Peter. He apparently was extremely careful in detailing the information he received from the latter.

Mark was a close relative of Barnabas, who accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys. Mark returned home from the first missionary journey. This caused dissension between Paul and Barnabas. Barnabas wished to take John Mark on the second journey, while Paul objected. Later Paul spoke affectionately of John Mark and their differences were obviously settled.

Date:

It is not possible to set a precise date for the appearance of this book. A large portion of the commentators believe Mark was the first of what we call the synoptic gospels, and that both Matthew and Luke drew from the writings of Mark. There are many parallel passages. This position is uncomfortable in that all three of these writers are inspired and there is no need for any one of them to depend upon the others for source material.

Nature of the Book:

While Matthew wrote particularly to the Jews and spent much time in proving Jesus to be the promised King and Messiah, Mark directs his remarks more to the Gentiles. Mark has a tendency to explain Jewish laws and customs whereas Matthew assumes the reader is familiar with such.

The first verse of the book presents the theme of the entire work. Jesus Christ is referred to as the “Son of God.” Mark proceeds to support that thesis through the use of Christ’s power over both the natural world and the demonic world. The miracles and the parables are highlighted. He does not spend as much time or as many words as any of the other three writers on the life of the Master. He gets directly to the point. Jesus is the

Chapter 1

Mar 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

Mar 1:2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Mar 1:3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Mar 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Mar 1:5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

Mar 1:6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

Mar 1:7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

Mar 1:8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

We are now ready to begin a study of the book of Mark. After covering the twenty-eight chapters of the book of Matthew, this should allow us to take a short breath. Matthew has twenty-eight chapters. Luke has twenty-four chapters. John has twenty-one chapters and Mark has only sixteen.

Therefore, we find that Mark does not include some of the events and teachings that are found in the other three accounts. Also, some of the descriptions of events and thoughts are a bit more condensed than in the other three.

The first two verses of the chapter are a quote from Malachi:

Mal. 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

John went out into the wilderness near the Jordan River to cry out that men ought to repent of their sins, to confess those sins, and to be baptized. By reminding people that they were lost in their sins, John was preparing the way for Christ who would come after him. As John the apostle recorded in this book of the New Testament, John the Baptist was making the path straight.

Often in those days someone would go ahead when roads were being developed. They would cut down the high places and fill in the low ones. The road would then be more easily built and more easily traveled later. We see the same thing taking place today in the constructing of any new road or highway. The work of John the baptist was very important in blazing the way for the Son of God to begin his earthly ministry.

John was a powerful and effective preacher. Men and women came to him from the entire

land of Judea. They confessed their sins and were baptized in the Jordan River for the remission of those sins.

John was a strange sight. He did not come clothed in the fine garments of the royal courts. He came dressed in a garment made of camel's hair. His food was not the delicacies one might find in the finest inns of the day. He ate locusts and wild honey. These humble beginnings fit well with the entire ministry of Jesus. The Lord said the birds of the air had nests and the foxes had dens, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head.

John was not like many of the popular preachers of our day. He spent little time talking about his own accomplishments. His message was that there was one coming after him who was far more important than he. In fact he, John, was not even worthy to stoop down and untie the shoe laces of the one he was introducing. This one who was to come after him would baptize, but the baptism he would administer would be a baptism with the Holy Spirit rather than a baptism in the water of the Jordan River. We find that John's prediction did come true as is recorded in the first chapter of the book of Acts when the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit to enable them to perform signs and wonders as they fulfilled the great commission to preach the gospel to every creature.

Mar 1:9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

Mar 1:10 And straightway coming up out of

the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

Mar 1:11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Mar 1:12 And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

Mar 1:13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

As John was preaching and baptizing the people, the Lord Jesus himself came to him to be baptized. At first John objected that Jesus should be baptizing him rather than the other way around. Jesus explained that it was necessary for John to baptize him, in order that all righteousness might be fulfilled. John then baptized the Lord.

As he baptized him the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and alighted upon Jesus. A voice came from heaven and declared that this man who was being baptized was the very Son of God, and that his Father in heaven was pleased with him.

As soon as Christ was baptized, the Spirit caused him to go out into the wilderness. He was there for forty days in fasting and prayer, and in danger of wild beasts. After this he was tempted three times by Satan. He overcame every temptation and kept himself pure. After the temptations the angels came and ministered to him.

Mar 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the

gospel of the kingdom of God,

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

Mar 1:16 Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

Mar 1:17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

Mar 1:18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

At this point John the baptist was cast into prison. He would later be beheaded for criticizing the adultery of powerful persons. John was not the last of those who preached Christ to be put into prison and killed.

Jesus began to preach that the time had come for the Kingdom of heaven to be established. For many long centuries God had been making preparations for this new spiritual kingdom. Now the hour was at hand. Men must believe the gospel. They must repent and prepare to enter into that kingdom and become faithful citizens. Notice that Christ did not say the Kingdom had come. He said it was at hand. It would be a bit later that Peter would preach the first gospel sermon and use the keys of the Kingdom to open its doors to those who were willing to meet the entrance requirements.

Jesus knew he was going to need helpers in

the great work he was about to do. As he walked along near the sea of Galilee he saw Simon Peter and Andrew casting their nets into the sea. The two were fishermen. Jesus called out for them to follow him. He would make them “fishers of men.” They would catch something far more valuable than the fish that swam in the waters of the Sea of Galilee.

Peter and Andrew left their fisherman's nets behind them and followed the Lord. Their choice would result in their becoming foundation stones in the wonderful temple of God which the Lord was to construct. Jesus himself would be the chief cornerstone and they would be next in authority, along with the other apostles.

Mar 1:19 And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

Mar 1:20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

Farther along Jesus saw James and John who were the sons of Zebedee. They were in a ship mending the nets. When Jesus called them, they immediately left their father behind them and went with the Saviour. Thus the band of twelve apostles had begun to form. Zebedee's wife was one of the women who were present at the time that it was found Jesus had risen from the grave.

Mar 1:21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

Mar 1:22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

Next the small group entered into the village of Capernaum. It was the Sabbath day and they went into the synagogue and taught. It should not be a surprise to us that Jesus entered the synagogue. The law of Moses was still in effect until Jesus died and caused it to be nailed to the cross. Jesus kept the law of Moses throughout his life.

Those who heard him in the synagogue were astonished at both what he taught and the authority with which he spoke. He spoke as one having the highest of authority and not as the scribes who merely explained that which higher authority had given to them. Later on Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.”* He also said, *“I have all authority in heaven and on earth.”* No scribe of the law was ever qualified to say either of those things.

Mar 1:23 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

Mar 1:24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

Mar 1:25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying,

Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

Mar 1:26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

Mar 1:27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

Mar 1:28 And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

Within the synagogue there was a man who had been invaded by an unclean spirit. The spirit cried out through the voice of the man and said, *“Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us?”* Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. The spirit did as Jesus commanded. You see Jesus had authority over the physical world such as the earth, the sea and the heaven where the birds fly. He also had authority over the kingdoms of men and over the spiritual world. Those who saw what the Lord had done were amazed and wondered about his teaching and his power over the spirit world. Soon his fame would be spread throughout all the region around the Sea of Galilee. Jesus and the apostles then left the synagogue and went to the house of Simon Peter and Andrew.

Mar 1:29 And forthwith, when they were

come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

Mar 1:30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

Mar 1:31 And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

When they came to the house they found that Peter's mother-in-law lay in bed, sick with a fever. When Jesus was told of this problem, he took the woman by the hand and lifted her up from the bed. Immediately the fever left her and she began to care for them. There is a strong lesson here. Christians help other people. As soon as they have been taught the gospel and have been healed of their sin, they begin to look for ways in which they can lift others from the bondage of sin and help them to walk free from that bondage.

There is another point which must be discussed. There are those today who believe the Pope of the Roman Catholic church is the successor to Peter. They believe the Pope should not marry. The passage of scripture we are studying says Peter had a mother-in-law. Peter was married.

Mar 1:32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

Mar 1:33 And all the city was gathered together at the door.

Mar 1:34 And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

People began to bring all manner of infirm persons to Christ in order that he might heal them. Some had various diseases. Others were possessed with devils or evil spirits. A massive crowd gathered at the door of the house where Jesus had been doing his healing. He healed many of them and demonstrated his divine power through the mighty signs and wondrous miracles which he accomplished.

Mar 1:35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

The next morning Jesus rose up very early in the morning, before it had even become light. He went out into a solitary place, and there he prayed to his Father in heaven. Being a child of God is sometimes very tiring. Preachers, as well as others, may find themselves exhausted from dealing with people who have problems. Jesus knew it was refreshing to get out into a solitary place where he could be alone with his Father in heaven. This may also be the case with you if you are a Christian who cares about others.

Mar 1:36 And Simon and they that were

with him followed after him.

Mar 1:37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.

Mar 1:38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

Mar 1:39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

Mar 1:40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Mar 1:41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

Mar 1:42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

Mar 1:43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

Mar 1:44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

Mar 1:45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

The Lord would not be alone for long. Peter

and the others soon followed after him and found him. They ask him if he did not know men were looking for him. Jesus replied that it was then time to go on to the next town. By this we must understand that he could not simply settle down in one village and confine his efforts to the people in that region. It was necessary for the Lord to become known to all the world. He was beginning that effort. The apostles would soon find out that they were to continue that task.

A leper came to Jesus asking for help. Jesus reached out his hand and touched him. He said, "*Be thou clean.*" The leprosy left the man and he started to go on his way. Jesus told him not to say a word to any man, but to go and show himself to the priests. Then he was to make an offering in thanksgiving for his cleansing. The law of Moses commanded that the priests be given the authority to determine when a person had been cleansed of leprosy. Jesus knew what the priest would say. The man was clean.

The man did not listen very well. Right away he began to tell his story to everyone who would listen. This meant that Jesus was no longer able to enter into that city because of the press of the multitude. He had to go out into a deserted place. Even then they came to him from every direction. Men have done that from that day to our own.

Chapter 2

Mar 2:1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

Mar 2:2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

We are now ready to look carefully at the second chapter of the book of Mark. It will help to spend just a moment reminding ourselves of what took place in the first chapter. In that chapter we found John the baptist baptizing Jesus to fulfil all righteousness. After Jesus was baptized, Jehovah spoke from the heavens and declared Christ to be his beloved Son. He added that he was well pleased with him. Jesus had begun to gather his apostles to give him assistance in the spread of the gospel of salvation. Immediately after this the Lord began to perform miracles of healing. The entire area spread the word and soon he was overwhelmed with those who came to him for help.

As we begin the study of chapter two, we find Jesus moving into the village of Capernaum. He went into a house in that village and very quickly the news spread that he was there. Right away the crowd gathered around the house in such large numbers that they could not get inside. There was not even room for them to get close to the door of the house. Christ took this opportunity to preach

the good news of salvation to them.

You see Jesus did not perform miracles for the purpose of amazing his listeners. The miracles did amaze the listeners, but the most important reason Jesus did his miracles was in order that he might tell men about the kingdom of heaven and the wonderful blessings which were to be waiting for those who loved God and obeyed him. So-called miracle workers today center attention upon themselves and all too often fill their own pocketbooks instead of following the example of the Lord and sacrificing themselves for the welfare of those who hear them.

Mar 2:3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

Mar 2:4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

Mar 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

As Jesus was preaching to those who had gathered around the door of the house, four men came carrying another who was sick of the palsy. There are different degrees of palsy. We see a person whose hands tremble and we talk about that person being palsied. The palsy which was cured

by Jesus was probably much more severe than just trembling hands. There are some palsied persons who shake so badly they cannot even walk. The man who was brought to Jesus was in that condition. He had to be carried on a pallet by others. When they were unable to get the man close to Christ because of the crowd, they took him up on the roof of the house and let him down to the Lord through the roof.

Jesus was much impressed by what they had done. When he saw how strong their faith was that he could help the man, he said to him, "*Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.*" He could have said, "Arise, take up your bed and walk." There was a connection between this man's sins and his disease. When the sins were forgiven his disease would disappear.

Mar 2:6 But there was certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

Mar 2:7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

Mar 2:8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

Mar 2:9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

Mar 2:10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

Mar 2:11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

Mar 2:12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

There were certain scribes nearby who noticed what Jesus had said. The scribes were copiers of the law of Moses. Their copy work cause them to be very familiar with the teachings of the Old Testament. They knew enough about it to realize that only God had the power to forgive sins. They decided Jesus had taken much more upon himself than he had a right to do. They started reasoning in their hearts about the Christ. Was he really bold enough to claim he could forgive sins? If he did make such claims, he was saying he was God. If one said he was God, when he was not, this was blasphemy. The law of Moses commanded that a man who blasphemed God should be stoned to death.

They would have been exactly right if Jesus had been an ordinary man. But Jesus was not an ordinary man. When Jesus was baptized the Father in heaven had claimed him as his Son. Now Jesus was performing miracles which no man could do if he did not possess the power of God himself. Jesus had been proven to be divine. He was not committing blasphemy. He was simply telling the truth. He could forgive sins.

The Lord knew what they were thinking. He

asked them why they were thinking such things as they were. To him it was very simple. It was easier to say, *“Thy sins be forgiven thee.”* than it was to say, *“Arise, take up thy bed and walk.”* However, if they insisted, he would make it even plainer. He told the palsied man to *“Arise and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine own house.”*

Immediate after Jesus spoke to the man, he got up off his pallet, picked the pallet up, and walked off. Those who were watching could hardly believe what they had seen. They glorified God and said that they had never observed such a thing to happen before.

We can only imagine how the jealousy of the scribes and Pharisees was rising up within them. They had been used to receiving the praises of men from every side. Now this man called Jesus Christ was stealing the honor they had been given by the people. It was not to be long before they took action to see if they could not turn things around and reclaim their precious pride. This was the beginning of a long and difficult confrontation between Jesus and these selfish religious leaders. It would lead to his death.

Mar 2:13 And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

Mar 2:14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

Jesus left the house where the palsied man had been healed and moved out to the seaside. As he moved along the multitude of people followed him. He was gaining more favor with the people all the time.

As he walked along, he saw a tax collector named Levi. The man was busy taking the tax payments from the people as the Lord came up to him. Jesus commanded him to rise from his task of tax collecting and follow him. Levi did as Jesus commanded. Levi was to become one of the twelve apostles. He would later write the the account of the life of Christ known to us today as the book of Matthew.

When those who were jealous of Jesus saw that he had invited a tax collector to follow along with him they felt they had reason to bring him down in the eyes of the people. Tax collectors were called publicans. The taxes they collected were sent to the Roman governors and made the government rich while the people were made poor. People have never liked paying taxes. But when the taxes are being collected by a government which does not seem to care about anything except taking advantage of you, the dislike becomes hatred. The Jews hated those among them who gathered taxes to be sent to Rome. By selecting Matthew, Jesus had taken one of their enemies to be his disciple. The scribes believed they could use this against him to get him out of their hair.

Mar 2:15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus

sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

Mar 2:16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

Mar 2:17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

This was not the end of it. Jesus not only invited Matthew to become his disciple. He went to Matthew's house where there were other tax collectors and sinners. He sat down to eat with them. Jesus enemies began to ask his disciples why he felt so free to eat and drink with such hateful persons.

The criticism did not bother Jesus in the least. Although they were not sincere in their attack upon him, Jesus acted as if their question deserved an answer. He explained that there was a good reason why he and his disciples should mix and mingle with the publicans and sinners. These people were in need of the spiritual influence he and his apostles could offer them. They were sinsick. Sinsick people need a spiritual doctor in the very worst way. He went on to say that he had not come into the world to call for a change in righteous men. He

had come to turn sinners from the way that leads to spiritual death.

Mar 2:18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

Mar 2:19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

Mar 2:20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

There was another criticism made against Jesus and his friends. The disciples of John the baptist had fasted. The disciples of the Pharisees also fasted. Could Jesus give any reason why his disciples did not fast like those of John and of the Pharisees? Jesus answer was as clear as crystal. The time that he was in the world, walking the roads of Palestine with his followers was just like a wedding feast. He was the bridegroom. He had come to meet and claim his bride. This was a happy time. It was not a time to mourn. Who ever heard of people mourning and grieving over an announcement that a young lady and her boy friend had decided to marry?

Jesus later spoke of the church as his bride. He had come for the purpose of searching out

those who loved him enough to become a part of his church. He was certainly not unhappy when he found that kind of people. Nor should those who loved him spend the time with him mourning. The time would come later when the bridegroom would be taken away from them and caught up to heaven. Then men would have reason to weep and fast. But, that time had not yet come.

Mar 2:21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

Mar 2:22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

Christ then peered deep into the heart of those who were trying to find fault with him and his disciples. He knew they were trying desperately to cling to the manners and customs of the law. That was a mistake. Although the law did not pass away until the death of Jesus upon the cross, it was still true that it had but a little time to remain in control. Then a new day would arise. The old covenant given through Moses would be removed and the New Covenant given by God's own Son would replace it.

Jesus and his church would bring in that new day. It was wrong of the scribes and Pharisees to stand in the way of the change. They were doing

the same thing a woman does when she puts a piece of new cloth on a very old garment to repair it. The old garment has done its job. The fabric is weak. When stress is placed on the garment, it tears around the place where the patch was sewed on. All this does is to make the hole a little bigger than it was before. The Pharisees kept wanting to patch up the old law when it had already brought men to the point where Jesus could be introduced. It did not need patching. It was about to fade into the background and be replaced by a new covenant.

The Lord used another example. He said, No man puts new wine into an old wineskin. If he does that, the new wine will begin to ferment, and will cause the wineskin to burst. The wine will be spilled out and lost.

It was time for a brand new garment. It was time for a new wineskin. The law did not need to be patched any more. Jesus was ready to present a completely new system. The old temple would be replaced by the church. The old sacrifices of bulls, lambs and goats would be replaced by the sacrifice of Christ himself upon the cross. The promised land of Canaan would be replaced by a New Jerusalem where men and women would eat the bread of life and drink water from the river of life.

Mar 2:23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

Mar 2:24 And the Pharisees said unto him,

Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

Mar 2:25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?

Mar 2:26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

Mar 2:27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

Mar 2:28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

His enemies were ready to offer yet another criticism. As his disciples moved through the corn fields, they had pulled off some of the ears of corn and had prepared to eat them. It was the sabbath day. God had commanded that men not work on the sabbath. Those who did could be stoned. Would Jesus condemn his disciples or not. If he did not, they felt he was breaking the sabbath and they were justified in having him stoned.

Jesus pointed out to them that David one time took his men into the temple and ate of the shewbread which was intended as a sacrifice to God. The sabbath was not to destroy men by causing them to be hungry. It was meant to give men rest.

But there was something even more important. Jesus Christ was God on earth. He had the right to determine what would and would not be done on the sabbath day. As one of the three persons of the Godhead, He had created the Sabbath. He was Lord of the Sabbath. His critics did not realize whom they were scolding.

Chapter 3

Mar 3:1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

Mar 3:2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.

Mar 3:3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

Mar 3:4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

Mar 3:5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

Mar 3:6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

In this third chapter of Mark, we will find Jesus healing a man with a withered hand, choosing more of his twelve apostles, and talking about the importance of being united against the power of Satan. These are all very important topics. Please read carefully.

We find Jesus entering into the synagogue as the chapter begins. The Lord spent much time in the synagogue. This was where the Jews had met

together to worship God for many many long years. As a faithful Jew, Jesus was pleased to meet with his friends and offer his own praise to the Father in heaven. He also took these occasions to introduce the Kingdom of God to all who would hear him.

On this particular sabbath day he found a man in the synagogue who had a withered hand. The jealous rulers of the Jews watched Jesus with great intensity, to see if he would heal the man on the sabbath day. They felt this would give them an excuse to criticize his actions. It was not lawful to work on the sabbath.

They did not have long to wait. Jesus spoke to the man and told him to stand forth. As soon as the man had moved out toward him, the Lord asked his critics if it was lawful to do good on the sabbath, or to do evil. Was it better to save life or to kill? They were unable to answer his question. They simply remained quiet and waited to see what would happen.

Jesus first looked around at them and grieved because they were so hard hearted. Then he told the man to stretch out his withered hand. When the man reached out his hand Jesus caused it to become just as useful as the other one. He was not one whit fearful of what the Pharisees might say or do. They might do as they would. He had the responsibility to serve his Father in heaven. If his enemies attacked him, he knew all things would work out for his own good and also for the good of the Kingdom.

The Pharisees left him then and began to

make plans to destroy him. They decided to enlist the help of the Herodians. These were politically minded men whom the Pharisees thought would fight against any man who talked about any kingdom other than the one with headquarters in Rome.

Mar 3:7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea,

Mar 3:8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

Mar 3:9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

Mar 3:10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

Mar 3:11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

Mar 3:12 And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

Jesus was not yet ready for face to face conflict. There was still much teaching to be done. And so he gathered his apostles together and moved out to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. As he led the way a large multitude followed behind him. They had come from the region of Galilee and from various

parts of the land of Judea. They had even come from as far away as the other side of the Jordan River and from Tyre and Sidon on the coast of the Mediterranean.

The Lord asked his disciples to make arrangements for a small ship to be sailed close to the shore. He needed to be able to escape the press of the excited crowd who waited to hear his teachings and receive healing of their infirmities through his divine power. He had healed so many that the word had spread everywhere. Those who heard of the things he had done wanted to get close enough to touch him.

He did heal many of them. Even the unclean spirits which dwelt in some of them were caused to fall down before him and cry out saying, "*Thou art the Son of God.*" He then charged his listeners to be quiet and not tell others about him at that time. This may sound contrary to the great commission in which he urged all of us to "Go unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

However, this was a very special time. If he had not been careful to slow things down it could have become difficult to move from place to place, or even to find a place where those who needed him could get through the throng of people.

We need not worry about what he said to the disciples at that time. We cannot preach too much. We need not be concerned about heaping too much glory upon him. He is the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Our problem is usually just the opposite. People will flock to hear the latest pop music or watch the Saturday and Sunday football games.

However, they are far less apt to fill the buildings of worship to overflowing, causing others to have no room to sit.

Mar 3:13 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.

Mar 3:14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

Mar 3:15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

Mar 3:16 And Simon he surnamed Peter;

Mar 3:17 And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

Mar 3:18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite,

Mar 3:19 And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.

Jesus went to a mountain. He called some select few to come to him. Then he chose out twelve men who would walk along with him and serve him. These twelve were to be specially ordained to learn from him, to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of heaven, and to heal sickness and cast out devils. As far as I know, almost every one of them died a martyr's death at the hands of those who hated

everything Christ stood for.

Among the twelve were: Simon Peter, James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, Then there were Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew, and Matthew and Thomas and James the son of Alpheus and Thaddeus and Simon the Canaanite—and Judas who betrayed him.

We ought to think twice about the order of this list and the little note tacked on at the end. The last of the list was Judas Iscariot. This man's name is almost always followed by the words, "*who betrayed him.*" Even as this list is being given, before those three and a fraction years the apostles walked with the Lord, Jesus knew he was constantly in the company of a man who would sell him to his enemies for thirty pieces of silver.

How much would you sell him for dear reader? Would it be for a few coins to rattle in your pocket? Would it be for a high paying job? Would it be for a mansion on earth? Would it be for fame and popularity among men? Whatever it might be, the price is too low. Not all of the goods or fame on earth are valuable enough to justify betraying your Lord. And do not think you can betray him and not be noticed. He knew the heart of Judas. He also knows your heart. No one can ever offer you enough to sell out the Son of God.

Mar 3:20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

Mar 3:21 And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

Mar 3:22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

Mar 3:23 And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

Mar 3:24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

Mar 3:25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

Mar 3:26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

Mar 3:27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

In spite of the fact that he had moved away from the crowd to go to the mountain where there would be fewer people, they continued to seek him out. He and the apostles went into a house, but the multitude surrounded the house and made it nearly impossible for them to eat a meal.

This matter was beginning to become serious in the eyes of his friends. They went out to hold him back and commented that "*He is beside himself.*" What did his friends mean by saying this? It is one thing for one's enemies to talk about a person being out of his head. It is something quite different for one's friends to make the same comment.

I believe the meaning is this. The things Jesus

was doing had collected such a throng that things were becoming impossible. His small band could not escape from the hustle and bustle. They could not even eat a meal in peace. Could the Lord not see that things had gotten completely out of hand? They felt he needed to come to his senses and slow things down a bit.

You know my friends, this same sort of thing sometimes happens to devoted Christians of all the ages. If one gives himself or herself completely to the service of Christ, he will sometimes be accused of being a “religious nut.” Even his friends placed Jesus in that category, at least for the moment.

The scribes who had come from Jerusalem were happy to join in accusing him of being crazy. They said, “*He hath Beelzebub. It is by the prince of the devils that he casts out devils.*” Jesus then called his disciples together and taught them a very vital lesson. The scribes were wrong. Neither the Kingdom of God, nor the followers of Satan can last long if they fight against one another. He was not working with Satan. He was fighting against him. It was not by the power of the Devil that he cast out devils. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Lord then explained that before one can enter into the house of a strong man and take his goods, it is necessary to first bind the strong man and then one can take that which he has. Jesus was in the process of binding up the strong man when he cast the devils out of those whom they had invaded.

Mar 3:28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:

Mar 3:29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.

Mar 3:30 Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Then Jesus went on to accuse his critics of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. He explained that this was a very serious sin. All sins would be forgiven to men except for the sin of blasphemy against the Spirit of God. The one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not receive forgiveness. He will be in danger of eternal damnation.

Just how had these who accused the Lord of casting out devils blasphemed against the Holy Spirit? The answer is that they had said the power of the Holy Spirit was in reality the power of Satan. That, my friends, is the horrible sin they had committed. Be most careful when you accuse a man of being a son of Satan when that man is truly doing the work of Jehovah. You will have placed yourself in the most dangerous position possible.

The next puzzle is to try to explain why one may be forgiven of all sins except the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Can one not be forgiven of that sin if he will repent of it and do better? I think that the question itself contains it's own answer. The man who blasphemes the Holy Spirit is of such a nature that he will not repent of that

sin and confess that he did wrong. Once he reaches the state where he can claim the work of God is being done by the Devil, it is unlikely that the man will turn back. It is not that God would not forgive if he would turn. He simply will not turn from that sin.

The atheist and the infidel accuse Jesus of being a liar. He claimed to be the Son of the living God. Either he was right or he was a lying son of Satan. To accuse the Son of God of being the child of the Devil is to blaspheme the Spirit of God which allowed him to perform his wondrous miracles.

Mar 3:31 There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

Mar 3:32 And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

Mar 3:33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?

Mar 3:34 And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

Mar 3:35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Jesus mother, Mary, and his fleshly brothers came to see him. They could not get through the press of the crowd. They called out to him. His disciples informed him that they were seeking for him. He then said a very strange thing. He said,

“Who is my mother, or my brethren?” Then he looked around at those who had come to hear him teach and see his miracles. He said, *“Behold, my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.”*

Jesus knew something some of us never find out. Those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ may be far closer to us than others who are brothers our sisters, or our children in the flesh. Some of the Christians in the congregations where we worship, may well be as dear, or even dearer to us than our own flesh and blood. Who are your mother, and your brethren and your sisters? If you are a devoted Christian they will be those who have been born a second time into the spiritual family of God.

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Chapter 4

Mar 4:1 And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

Mar 4:2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

Mar 4:3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:

Mar 4:4 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

Mar 4:5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

Mar 4:6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

Mar 4:7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

Mar 4:8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

Mar 4:9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

We are ready now to turn our attention to the fourth chapter of the book of Mark. This chapter

deals with parables Jesus presented concerning the sowing of seed.

Jesus was the world's greatest master at taking simple events of daily life and using those events to teach great spiritual truths. These parables reached deep into the hearts of his listeners while he was still alive. Nor have they lost the power to do the same today. All over the world men and women remember and love the parables of the Lord. The world is a different place today because of the lessons we have learned from the lips of our Saviour.

As we closed out the third chapter of Mark we found Jesus at the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He had been accused of casting out devils by the power of Satan. He quickly met this charge by telling the audience that it was not likely that Satan would fight against himself. Jesus had cast out devils by the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

After answering the Pharisees and rulers of the Jews, Jesus entered into a ship which was near the shore and began to teach the people through parables. The first of these parables had to do with a man who was sowing seed. In our mind's eye we can see the busy farmer as he stretches out his hand and scatters the seed while he walks along.

The Lord said some of the seed fell by the wayside and the birds of the air came along and ate it up. We have no trouble at all in getting the picture. We have all seen a flock of blackbirds swoop down from the sky and light on a lawn where seed has just been sown. They busily eat up the seed before it has time to sink into the ground. Jesus made it even more vivid by saying the seed fell by

the wayside. The wayside would have been packed hard and the seed would have been easy pickings for the hungry birds.

Christ then said that some of the seed fell upon stony ground where there was very little earth. This seed soon began to sprout but very shortly, when the sun came up, it withered and died. Again, we have all seen lawns and fields where rock was close to the surface. We know how sickly the plants look when the sun beats down upon them with little moisture or food beneath them.

Christ went on to say that some of the seed fell among thorns. The thorns robbed it of the food needed to grow. Before long the thorns had choked out the plants produced by the sower's seed. The plants were not able to produce the harvest which the sower expected.

But the story did not stop there. Some of the seed fell upon rich and fertile soil. It did produce a bountiful harvest. Some of it brought forth thirty times as much as was planted. Some produced sixty times as much. Some even rewarded the sower with one hundred times as much as he had sown.

Then the Lord challenged his listeners. He said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." As happened very often, the twelve apostles wanted to know just what he meant by the parable of the sower.

Mar 4:10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

Mar 4:11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom

of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

Mar 4:12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

Mar 4:13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

Mar 4:14 The sower soweth the word.

Mar 4:15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

Mar 4:16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

Mar 4:17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

Mar 4:18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

Mar 4:19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Mar 4:20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and

receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

Jesus answered that there were listeners who were just as eager to hear and understand as the apostles were. There were also others who would not understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. He would be glad to explain to those who were hungry for the truth. All he could do for those who did not care was to grieve over their lack of concern. They saw, yet they did not perceive the meaning of the parables. They did not wish to understand. Therefore they refused to be converted. Without being converted there was no possibility of the forgiveness of their sins.

Then Jesus began to explain the parable of the sower to the twelve apostles. He said that the sower was one who was spreading the Word of God. The wayside was the hardened hearts of those who did not care about God's truth. Because they would not allow it to sink into their hearts, Satan found it easy to come along and remove the seed.

The seed which alighted on stony ground was that portion of the Word of God which fell into the hearts of those men and women who were unstable. They heard the word eagerly at first. Then, after a short time they fell to temptation or persecution. We all know just how real Jesus picture was right here. How many times we have seen those who were converted during the course of a gospel meeting. They seemed ready to turn the world upside down for the Father in heaven. Then, when Satan

dangled some of his pretties in front of their eyes, they went running after them. When one of their brothers or sisters in Christ said something they considered offensive, they decided not to continue their association with their fellow Christians. Soon they were nowhere to be seen. Their hearts had no richness in which the Word could grow.

Jesus said the third portion of the seed fell among the thorns of lust and pleasure which choke out the appetite for the living water and the bread of life. Those who fall to such pleasures and lusts walk right into the snares of Satan and never produce fruit in the Kingdom of God. Their talents are turned toward self satisfaction.

The fourth portion of seed was that which fell upon good ground. It found hearts that were eager to receive it. Soon it sprung up and overcame the thorns and the brightness of the sun. It produced a bounteous harvest and pleased the heavenly Father who was watching to see what kind of harvest his seed would bring forth.

Mar 4:21 And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

Mar 4:22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

Mar 4:23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

Mar 4:24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that

hear shall more be given.

Mar 4:25 For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

Jesus followed this parable of the sower with a sharp question for his apostles. He asked where one would place a candle when it was lighted. Would it be placed under a bushel basket? Would it be placed underneath a bed where it could not be seen? Or would the one who lighted it put it on a candlestick where it would be held up high and shed light upon everthing close by? One does not have any trouble finding the answer to Jesus question. Everyone knows the one who lighted the candle would not be so foolish as to hide it. He would put it in a position where all could see by it's light. The Lord added that if any had ears to hear and perceive the meaning of what he had just said, they were invited to do that.

He said, *“If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.”* The light of God's Word must be preached. It cannot be hidden under a cover of any kind. That is not the end of the story. Once the Spiritual truth was preached, It would be up to mankind to open their ears and receive it. God would be ready to measure the quality of life produced in the hearers. If they reached out for truth when it was presented to them, they would have more opportunities. If they did not, their opportunities would be reduced.

I would like to compare this with personal experiences I have had in the public school

classrooms. As a teacher, one soon identifies those students that want to excel. Through the course of a year the teacher expects the superior student to hand in fine work. He will be looking for those good things as each paper is graded. It is not that way with the lazy student. The teacher has come to expect sloppy and careless papers. It is harder to recognize good work from a student who has been consistently weak and lazy.

Mar 4:26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

Mar 4:27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

Mar 4:28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

Mar 4:29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

The Lord said the harvest in the Kingdom of God is like what happens after the sower sows his seed. The farmer goes to sleep and gets up day after day. When all is right the farmer finds that the seed has sprouted and young plants have sprung up. Soon the plants have grown tall and are producing ears of grain. Finally, when the time has come, the farmer takes his sickle and gathers the harvest into the barn. Just as the farmer expects the seed he sows to spring up and finally produce

a fine harvest, God expects the seed of his Word to find it's way into good and honest hearts in which the Word will thrive.

Mar 4:30 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

Mar 4:31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:

Mar 4:32 But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

Mar 4:33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.

Mar 4:34 But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

Mar 4:35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

Jesus said we ought to liken the Kingdom of God to a grain of mustard seed which grows up to become a great tree. It begins as one of the tiniest seeds of all. Yet when it has germinated and grown to maturity it has become a plant large enough for the birds of the air to find shade in it.

There is a lesson here which every Christian should take to heart. It is all too easy to give up

when we put forth both time and effort into the development of God's kingdom. Too often we see the seed of the Word of God choked out by the cares of the world. It sometimes seems that there is no real hope that it will ever grow and fill the earth. Jesus denied that. The Kingdom has already grown from Jesus and his small band of apostles to millions of faithful citizens. God works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. The Kingdom of God will finally overcome every enemy. That includes the last enemy which is death itself.

Mark tells us that the parables which were given in his account were only a part of the total Jesus used. The Lord used so many parables that it seemed almost everything he taught was illustrated by a parable.

Mar 4:36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

Mar 4:37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

Mar 4:38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

Mar 4:39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

Mar 4:40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

Mar 4:41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Evening had come to the shores of the sea of Galilee. Christ told his apostles there was a need to cross over to the other side of the sea. The multitude was sent away and Jesus and his apostles started for the opposite shore. While they were on the way a fierce storm came up. The waves were tossing high and the ship was in serious danger of capsizing. All that were in the ship had begun to panic and fear for their lives. The water was beginning to get into the boat and fill it up. It seemed that it would not be but a short time before it sunk.

In the middle of all this Jesus was found sleeping on a pillow in the rear part of the ship. We are reminded of Jonah, who also found himself in a ship in the middle of a ferocious storm. The sailors came to Jonah and asked that he pray to his God as the rest of the passengers were doing. Jonah told them the problem was himself. He was running away from Jehovah. If they would throw him overboard the waves would be calmed. While Jonah was the problem, Jesus is the answer!

This time those who were in the ship with Jesus woke him and asked him if he did not care that they were about to perish. They had good reason to turn to him for help. He had shown that he was the Master of both diseases and demons. Perhaps he could rescue them from death by drowning.

He could. Jesus arose and rebuked the wind. He called out for the sea to be still. The wind

ceased and the sea became calm. Jesus was the Master of ocean and earth and skies. Then Christ turned to his apostles and scolded them for having such weak faith. He asked them why they were so fearful. Did they have no confidence in the power of God?

They then asked one another, *“What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”*

Chapter 5

Mar 5:1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

Mar 5:2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

Mar 5:3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

Mar 5:4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

Mar 5:5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

Mar 5:6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

Mar 5:7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

Mar 5:8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

As the fifth chapter of Mark begins, we find Jesus and his apostles in a boat on the sea of Galilee. A storm had arisen and the waves were threatening their safety. Jesus had rebuked the waves and commanded the sea to be at peace. The

wind and the waves had obeyed his voice.

Now they came to the west shore of the sea and were ready to depart from the ship and enter into the country of the Gadarenes. This was a bit wilder country than that on the east side of the sea. It would not take long for this to become evident. As soon as they left the ship and stepped on land, Jesus and his companions were met by a man who was plagued by an unclean spirit. It is almost as though the Devil himself had set up the meeting to embarrass Christ. However, the embarrassment was to be on the other side. There would be embarrassment, but it would be that of Satan, and not that of Jesus and his devoted disciples.

The man who met them had been living in the tombs. He is described as having an unclean spirit. It was unclean because it was a servant of Satan. Compared to the pure and holy Son of God, Satan, the prince of the devils, is filthy and corrupt. His spiritual helpers fit the same description. There is no better way to paint a picture of the spirits who serve Satan than to portray them as unclean.

This man who met Jesus had been living in the tombs. He was wild and unmanageable. He had very great strength and had been able to burst loose from any bonds which had been used to try to restrain him. None could do anything with him. He was a most miserable creature and he was capable of making others fearful and miserable also. Over and over, men had tried to bind him with ropes or chains. Each time he had been able to break loose. He spent his time either in the tombs themselves, or else in the wild mountainous country west of the

Jordan. He would cry out with weird noises and would cut himself with stones. To say the least, he was not a very pretty sight.

The spirit that dwelt in the man was in complete control. Nevertheless, when he saw Jesus, he ran toward him and pleaded with Jesus not to make things miserable for him. He called out to Jesus and said, “What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.”

The reason he said this was that Jesus had commanded him to come out of the man. The unclean spirit contended that it was perfectly alright for him to torment the man without concern for the discomfort of the man. Yet Jesus was expected to leave the unclean spirit alone and not cause the spirit any discomfort. This is strange thinking. Why did the unclean spirit have the right to make the man in whom he dwelt uncomfortable while thinking he had the right to ask Jesus to leave him free to do anything he pleased? Those who know anything at all about the Devil and his children know that this is right in line with his pattern of thinking. There is never any thought about the welfare of others. Everything is focused upon self. There is no room for the love of man or God in the mind of Satan.

Mar 5:9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

Mar 5:10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the

country.

Mar 5:11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

Mar 5:12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

Mar 5:13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

Mar 5:14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

Mar 5:15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

Mar 5:16 And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

Mar 5:17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

Jesus spoke to the unclean spirit. Notice that he was not speaking to the man in whom the unclean spirit had taken up housekeeping. He spoke to the spirit itself. He asked the spirit his name. This was not really necessary for Jesus information. He knew very well who or what he was opposing. But he did wish to make it clear for those around him

at the time, and for us today, that the Devil and his servants can do enormous damage to men and women when they are invited into human hearts.

The unclean spirit gave what we see today as an unexpected answer. He revealed that he was not **one**. He was many. He did not have a single name. It would require considerable effort to dislodge the entire legion of spirits from the body of the man. The spirits did understand that Jesus had the power to drive them out of the man, and they begged Jesus not to drive them out of their dwelling place.

Just what did they want Jesus to do with them? They had a solution. There was a herd of pigs feeding on the side of a mountain nearby. They desired that Jesus not leave them homeless, but allow them to enter into the bodies of the pigs. Jesus allowed them to enter into the pigs, who then ran down the side of the mountain and into the sea, where they were drowned.

Atheists have seized upon this account to criticize Jesus for having no concern for the owners of the pigs. The point is not well taken. God was perfectly able to see that the owners of the pigs came out alright in the end. We might take note that God had declared pork unclean for human consumption during the days of the Old Testament. That was to change when Peter saw a sheet let down from heaven with both clean and unclean animals in it. God, at that time, said that he had made much that had been unclean before to be clean from that time on.

Mar 5:18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil

prayed him that he might be with him.

Mar 5:19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

Mar 5:20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

When the people who heard about the event came to see about it, they found the man who had been possessed by the legion of unclean spirits sitting clothed and in his right mind. They were afraid and asked Jesus to leave their coasts. This was a sad mistake. One does not ask Jesus to leave when he has provided the opportunity for blessing. It is possible to lose the blessings one already has.

The man who had been cleansed wished to stay with Jesus, but the Lord told him to go and tell his friends what wonderful things God had done for him. When he did so, those whom he told were amazed.

Mar 5:21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea.

Mar 5:22 And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

Mar 5:23 And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death:

I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

Mar 5:24 And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

After these things had taken place, Jesus passed back over to the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Many people began to gather to hear him and to profit from his miracles. Among them was the ruler of a synagogue named Jairus. Jairus had a daughter who was so very sick she was at the very point of death. When Jairus came to Jesus he fell at the feet of the Lord and begged him to come and lay his hands on the sick daughter and heal her. He had confidence that this man Jesus, about whom he had heard so much, was able to bring his daughter back to a healthy condition. As Jesus moved along toward the house of the ruler of the synagogue, the people began to gather around him and follow him.

Mar 5:25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

Mar 5:26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

Mar 5:27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

Mar 5:28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

Mar 5:29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

Mar 5:30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

Mar 5:31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

Mar 5:32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

Mar 5:33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

Mar 5:34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

One of those who came to him was a woman who had been losing blood for a number of years. She had spent everything she had on a number of physicians. Nothing had helped. Rather than improving, she had grown worse. She had heard about the miraculous powers of Jesus. She felt that if she could only touch him she might be helped. My friends, we may not be able to touch Jesus physically as this woman was able to do. What we can do is reach out to Jesus in prayer. He has power which we do not have. We may rest assured that those who come to him in faith will receive that which is best for them. He has spoken to all

men and invited them to come to him and be at rest. He will help. It may not be in the way you expect. But the help will be there if you love him and obey him.

As soon as this woman touched Jesus, the loss of blood ceased. She was healed of the plague which had tormented her for over twelve years. Jesus realized that healing power had been transferred from himself to some other person. He asked who it was that had touched his clothing.

The woman who had been healed was fearful and trembled. She knew her plea had been answered, but she was humbled by being in the presence of someone who could do what Jesus had just done. Finally she admitted that it was she who had received the healing power from him.

Jesus told her that her faith had made her whole. She was to go in peace and enjoy her newfound state of health. Friends, there are two great lessons here. The first is that there are many problems which face mankind that only Jesus Christ is able to solve. Some of them have to do with mental health. Others have to do with the physical and social aspects of life. Regardless of what the problem is which causes you anguish, it can be treated by drawing close to Jesus and depending upon his healing power. You are invited to do that by the Lord himself. You only cheat yourself when you ignore his invitation. The second lesson is that one ought to constantly thank God for his love and care. He expects and he deserves thanksgiving from those whom he blesses.

Mar 5:35 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

Mar 5:36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

Mar 5:37 And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

Mar 5:38 And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.

Mar 5:39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

Mar 5:40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

Mar 5:41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

Mar 5:42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

Mar 5:43 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

Jesus and those who thronged around him were

steadily moving in the direction of the house where the ruler of the synagogue lived. Jesus would tend to the situation when he arrived there. However, a serious difficulty arose. The difficulty was that before he arrived, messengers came from where the sick daughter was. They told the ruler of the synagogue that there was no reason to waste the time of the Lord. Jairus' daughter had died.

We can only begin to imagine what went through the mind of this loving father. He had come begging Jesus to heal his daughter. He had explained that she was at the very point of death. If Jesus had only moved on a little more quickly he might have been able to heal her and make her well before she died. Rather than doing that, Jesus had paused on the way to do other things. I suspect that if we had been in that man's place, we would have been bitter. Let us remember that God does things at His time, and not ours.

Jesus did not give the ruler of the synagogue much time for reflection. He told the man not to be afraid. He must believe in the power of God. The Lord then sent the crowd away and kept only Peter, James and John with him. He went to the home of the ruler of the synagogue and found the friends and relatives of the young girl weeping and wailing. She had died while he was doing other things. The heart of the ruler of the synagogue must have dropped in him like a stone.

When Jesus came to where the child was he asked why everyone was making such a commotion over the matter. The child was not dead. She was

only asleep. Jesus knew the difference between sleep and death. One does not wake up from true death. One can wake up from sleep. Yes, we would have also said the child was dead. No doubt her breathing had stopped and her heart had quit. The Son of God knew, however, that he had the power to cause her to live again. He informed the grieving father that his daughter was only asleep. He could and would wake her up.

The friends and relatives mocked Jesus. They knew she had died. The Master was not disturbed in the least. He put all of them out of the room except for the father and mother of the dead child. Then he took her by the hand and said, "*Damsel, I say unto thee arise.*" Immediately she rose up and began to walk. Those who saw her alive and walking were greatly astonished.

It would have been easy to have given up hope that the young maiden would rise to walk and laugh with joy once more. Many men and women have done just that. Hope of better days has faded for them until they are ready to give up. It need not be that way. Matters can be made better. Turn to Jesus. He is the Great Physician. He can help, and He will!

Chapter 6

Mar 6:1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

Mar 6:2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

Mar 6:3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

Mar 6:4 But Jesus, said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

Mar 6:5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

Mar 6:6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

By this time Jesus had chosen his apostles and expected the message the gospel to begin spreading out from Jerusalem to the land of Judea and to the farthest reaches of the earth. As the Son of God he would have known of the tremendous resistance which would stand in its way. He did not let that stop him from commanding his faithful band to

begin their work.

We are told that he went out into his own country and his disciples followed him. Jesus was to meet very strong opposition from those who lived in his own country of Judea. He would say later that a prophet is not without honor except in his own country. We will see that attitude beginning to develop immediately.

As Jesus newly chosen apostles began to follow him across the countryside of Judea he arrived at a synagogue where he began to teach on the Sabbath day. Those who heard him were amazed at his wisdom. Where had he learned all the things he was teaching? From their point of view he was only a poor carpenter's son. His brothers and sisters were all well known to them and they had not shown such tremendous spiritual insight.

As he taught there on that sabbath day, all who heard him were astonished at his power as well as in his wisdom. Not only did Jesus demonstrate tremendous learning. He was able to do many mighty works which no man could do without divine help. As far as the general population knew Jesus had no formal education. His family was well known and no such understanding and power had been shown by other members of the family.

Jesus replied to them that he was a prophet of God and that it was quite common for a prophet to be rejected within his own country by those who knew his family and who had grown up beside him. We are told then that because of the doubts of the people of the community Jesus did no **mighty** works there. He did lay his hands on a few sick

folks and healed them. Then he went out into the surrounding villages and began his teaching.

Mar 6:7 And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

Mar 6:8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:

Mar 6:9 But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.

Mar 6:10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

Mar 6:11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Christ would need helpers. Therefore he called forth the twelve apostles and sent them forth in pairs. He imparted some of his own spiritual power to the twelve, allowing them also to take control over the evil and unclean spirits which plagued men and women.

Then he gave the apostles a strange instruction. He told them they were not to take anything for their journey. The only things they could carry with them were a staff and the clothing on their

backs. They were to take no money and no food. They were to wear sandals and were not to have two coats.

Wherever they were invited into a house, they were to stay until they departed from that area of the countryside. It seems clear that the household that invited the apostles to abide there received blessings from on high.

If they came to a house which would not invite them in, nor hear the teaching which they offered, they were to shake the dust off their feet and move on to another area. Those who rejected them would find that in the day of judgment Sodom and Gomorrah would have more mercy than those who rejected the Lord and his apostles.

And so Jesus and his small band of helpers went out on their way preaching the Kingdom of God and urging men to repent of their sins. The disciples probably knew very little of what the future held for their efforts. Today we have seen that from that simple beginning multiplied millions have heard and obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Both this world and the world to come have been altered by their spiritual labors.

If any refused to hear their preaching they were to depart from that place. They were to shake the dust off their feet and move on to another place where the gospel would be heard gladly. What a horrible thing it would be for those who rejected Jesus to have to face him in the judgment. One can almost hear him say, "You rejected me, now I must reject you for ever and ever."

Mar 6:12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

Mar 6:13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

Mar 6:14 And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad;) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

Mar 6:15 Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.

Then the apostles went out at Jesus command and began to preach that men should repent. It is not a simple matter to get men to repent of their sins. Repentance cannot take place until one admits that he or she has been wrong. Few people like to admit that they have made foolish decisions. Even when it becomes evident to everyone around them that they have acted foolishly, most persons stubbornly refuse to change their actions. Our pride is like a mountain over which we must climb before we can reach out for forgiveness. But, God will not forgive until men have repented.

To demonstrate that they had the right to preach the message of repentance, the apostles were given the power to do things which could only have been done through the hand of God. They began to cast out devils which plagued men with various problems. They anointed many who were sick and caused them to be healed. No doubt those who had

been healed went everywhere telling of the blessings they had received. Some of the hardest workers in the Church of Jesus Christ today are those who have been in very serious condition and have been rescued from the clutches of Satan. Among the gospel preachers today are some who have been drug addicts and thieves. They know the difference between the path that leads to destruction and the one that leads to life eternal.

Mar 6:16 But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

King Herod heard of the strange miracles that were taking place. He was very much concerned. After all he had been responsible for the murder of John the baptist. He was very much afraid that John had been raised from the dead and was behind these wonderful miracles. My friends, a guilty conscience is a difficult thing to live with. Do not think for a moment that King Herod could rest his head upon his pillow at night without his conscience reminding him that he had caused a good man to be put to death without a cause. After having John the baptist beheaded he would never see a completely peaceful day for the rest of his life.

Unlike Herod, there were others who decided the strange and powerful miracles which were occurring were the result of Elijah or one of the other prophets of old coming back from the grave.

It was not so with Herod. He became convinced that John the baptist had been raised from the dead and that he was the one responsible for the many miracles which were taking place.

Mar 6:17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.

You see, Herod had sent and laid hold on John the baptist because John had accused him of having married his brother Philip's wife. Kings do not like to be told they ought to repent. They normally believe they have the right to do almost anything they have the power to do.

Mar 6:18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

Mar 6:19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:

The woman Herodias was furious at John the baptist for telling Herod he was sinning in taking his own brother's wife to be his own. Herodias liked the idea of being the queen of the land. She was ready to rid the land of this pest called John the baptist. The problem was that she did not have the power to order John's death herself. She would have done so, but she was a bit fearful because John was known to be a holy man of God.

Mar 6:20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

Mar 6:21 And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;

Mar 6:22 And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.

Mar 6:23 And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

Mar 6:24 And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

Mar 6:25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

Mar 6:26 And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

Mar 6:27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,

Mar 6:28 And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

Mar 6:29 And when his disciples heard

of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

Finally Herodias developed a plan. It was birthday time for king Herod. Herodias planned a birthday party and invited many of the most important men of the kingdom to the party. Then, in the midst of the celebration, Herodias daughter came in and danced before the entire group. Herod was pleased with her dancing and offered to give her anything she desired up to half the kingdom. She replied that she desired the head of John the baptist on a platter. Although King Herod was sorry he had made such a rash promise, he did order John to be beheaded. John's disciples then came and took the body and laid it in a tomb. What a contrast we have between Herodias and Christ.

Mar 6:30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

Mar 6:31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

Mar 6:32 And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

Mar 6:33 And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.

Mar 6:34 And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion

toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

After this Jesus called his apostles together. They told Jesus of all the things they had done and taught. Jesus then commanded them to go out into a deserted place and rest for a time. There had been so many coming to them for teaching and healing that they had not even had time enough to stop and eat.

Mar 6:35 And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:

Mar 6:36 Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

Mar 6:37 He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?

Mar 6:38 He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

Mar 6:39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

Mar 6:40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.

Mar 6:41 And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

Mar 6:42 And they did all eat, and were filled.

Mar 6:43 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

Mar 6:44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

As Jesus and the apostles entered a ship and sought to find a deserted place, the people outran the ship and gathered again when it came to shore. They reminded Jesus of a sheep that had no shepherd. He began to teach them many truths. When the day had nearly come to an end the apostles came to Jesus and urged him to send the people into the villages to find food to eat. Jesus indicated that this was not necessary. The apostles were to give them something to eat. The apostles were surprised. They had nothing to give the people. Jesus had an answer. They had five loaves and two fishes. He looked up into heaven and blessed the food. Then he commanded that the multitude sit down on the green grass. He broke the loaves and the fishes and passed out food enough to the apostles that they were able to feed the entire multitude of about five thousand people. The entire multitude had more than enough to satisfy their hunger.

There is a spiritual lesson here for all of us

today. Jesus has the power to feed the souls of men. We may go searching throughout all the world for that which will fill our spiritual needs, without finding it. The Word of God is the answer. No man will ever be completely satisfied within his soul if he neglects to feast upon the Bread of Life which Jesus has made available. But no man will ever be spiritually starved if he will come to the Lord Jesus Christ for that Bread of Life and Living Water.

Mar 6:45 And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

Mar 6:46 And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

Mar 6:47 And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

Mar 6:48 And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

Mar 6:49 But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

Mar 6:50 For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

Mar 6:51 And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure,

and wondered.

Mar 6:52 For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

Mar 6:53 And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

Mar 6:54 And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,

Mar 6:55 And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

Mar 6:56 And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

As soon as the multitude had been fed, Jesus caused his apostles to enter a ship and they moved to the other side of the sea. At that point the Lord went to a mountain to pray to his Father in heaven.

The disciples had put out from the land while Jesus was in prayer. Shortly, a storm arose and the waves were tossing high. While his apostles were fearful in the ship, they saw Jesus moving toward them across the raging waves. As he came up to them, he told them not to be afraid. He went up into the ship and as he did so the storm calmed and the waves receded. Even the apostles were

astonished at this.

When the ship arrived on the other side of the Sea of Galilee his fame had already arrived there. People came from the entire region asking that he might touch them and make them whole. Jesus responded to their requests and healed a great many of them.

Chapter 7

Mar 7:1 Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

Mar 7:2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.

Mar 7:3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

Mar 7:4 And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

This chapter deals with Jesus attitude toward filth and defilement. He had a far different approach to the matter than men often have. He saw the defilement of the inner man to be far more serious than the dust and grime which might be found on the outside of a person's body. All of us have been acquainted with persons who abhorred physical dirt and had to be dressed immaculately with the finest of garments, but who cared little for the purity of the soul. Jesus spoke about this problem in this seventh chapter of Mark.

There are at least two reasons why these people had found fault. First, they were insanely jealous of the attention Jesus was drawing from the multitudes of the people who were hearing his teaching and watching his miracles. They were losing in popularity while Jesus was gaining. Second,

the scribes and Pharisees had elaborate procedures which they went through which were much more related to impressing those who watched them than they were to eating with clean hands.

Certainly it is good to wash one's hands before handling food and eating it. We all know the danger of including disease germs with the food which enters our body. The scribes and Pharisees did not know as much about disease germs as we do. They did have some feeling there was a need to wash their hands. However, they washed their hands because of the tradition or teaching of their leaders rather than because of fear of disease.

The chapter also tells us that after they had been to the market for the purpose of buying food, they would wash before they ate. Not only did they wash their hands. They washed cups and pots, various cooking vessels and even the tables upon which they ate. All of this sounds well and good to us. We do the same things today. The problem is that these scribes and Pharisees were much more interested in ceremony than they were in cleanliness.

Mar 7:5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

Mar 7:6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

Mar 7:7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments

of men.

Mar 7:8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

They attacked Jesus with a question. They asked why his disciples did not pay attention to the tradition or teaching of the elders, but ate with hands which had not been washed. They were probably half way honest about the question. They trusted their elders to lead them in the right paths. At the same time they should have recognized the hypocrisy which was woven into the whole procedure. Jesus would soon make that point clear.

Isaiah had recognized the problem in his own day. He also prophesied that it would arise again in the future. Too many times the religious leaders had been over impressed with their own importance and had attempted to draw the people's attention to the leader's own importance rather than pointing them to the commandments of the God of heaven.

Turn on your television my friends and watch the religious programs which come on. Use your own judgment to determine whether the star attraction on the program is the main speaker on the program, or whether it is the glorification of Jesus Christ and his Father in heaven. We do not have the divine ability to see through things that Jesus had. But even then I think we can see that Isaiah was right in saying there are some in every age who honor God with their lips, but whose hearts are far from him. Jesus said at another time, *"If*

the blind follow the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch.” You and I need to be careful who we follow. We need to compare what is taught with what the Bible teaches. If there is a difference, the Bible is right.

Mar 7:9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

Mar 7:10 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

Mar 7:11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.

Mar 7:12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

Mar 7:13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

Mar 7:14 And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:

Jesus then gave an example of just how the scribes and Pharisees were replacing God's commandments with their own human teachings. Moses, a prophet of God, had commanded that men honor their father and their mother. The Pharisees and scribes taught that one might ignore the needs of their father or mother if they decided to make a gift to the treasury of the elders. All that was

necessary to forget the needs of their parents was to declare that they were offering a gift to holy purposes.

Friends, Do you have the faintest idea that God would be pleased with one who refused to care for a deserving parent in order to put money into the contribution plate at church services? God does not ask us to make such a choice as this. In presenting such teaching, the Pharisees and scribes had cancelled out the will of God and replaced it with their own desires. They had made the word of God of no effect through their own tradition. The fact of the matter was that those hypocritical leaders of the Jews were men with clean hands but with filthy hearts.

Mar 7:15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

Mar 7:16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

Mar 7:17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

Mar 7:18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;

Mar 7:19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

Mar 7:20 And he said, That which cometh

out of the man, that defileth the man.

Mar 7:21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

Mar 7:22 Thefts, covetousness, wicked-ness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

Mar 7:23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Jesus then went farther with his explanation. He said there was nothing that defiles a man by entering him from the outside. That which truly defiled a man was that which came out from the inside. He invited everyone who had spiritual ears to hear what he had to say.

Just a bit later, as he entered into a house with his disciples, they wanted to hear more from him as to what he was teaching about defilement. Jesus shamed them for not understanding what he had taught. He explained that the material which goes into the mouth enters the belly and passes through the system and out through bowel movements. Such things did not defile a man.

Before someone becomes hasty and accuses Jesus of ignorance concerning disease we must hasten to say Jesus was not talking about diseases of the body. He no doubt knew men could damage the body by consuming germs and poisons. But Jesus was interested in the souls of men. The body soon dies. The soul lasts into eternity. That which poisons the body may cause physical death from which a

man may rise in the judgement to live with God. That which poisons the soul may cause spiritual death, or separation from God forever.

The Lord then gave a list of things which come forth from the inside of a man and result in the defiling of the soul. Along with other things, he included evil thoughts, fornication, adultery, thievery, murder, covetousness, lasciviousness, blasphemy and pride. These, he said, are the things which make one filthy in the sight of God.

Mar 7:24 And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.

Mar 7:25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

Mar 7:26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

Mar 7:27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

Mar 7:28 And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

Mar 7:29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

Mar 7:30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

At that point Jesus left the area where he had been teaching and went to Tyre and Sidon. There he entered into a house where he might have been secluded. It did not work. Soon his whereabouts was discovered and he could not be hid.

One of those who came to him was a Greek woman that had a daughter who was possessed by an unclean spirit. Such unclean spirits caused much grief to both those in whom they dwelt and in those who tried to care for them. Sometimes they had seizures or fits in which they fell writhing on the floor and foamed at the mouth. Sometimes they would remove their clothing and walk around naked in public. The mother of this young daughter begged Jesus to make her daughter well.

Jesus reply to the mother sounds almost cruel. He told her that the children must be fed before the dogs receive their portion. We must remember that the Jews considered the Gentiles to be on the same level as animals. I think Jesus very well knew what he was going to do for the mother and her daughter. I also think he wanted to instill a sense of humility in both this mother and in the minds of those who were nearby. If this woman would accept the fact that she did not deserve the healing power of God, but that it would only come through his grace, she would be rewarded.

The woman gave the right answer. She showed that she understood God had no obligation to do that which she was asking. She said, *Yes Lord:*

yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. Jesus was pleased with her humility. He told her to go her way for the devil had gone out of her daughter. When the woman came to her house she found that the daughter was lying on a bed and was well.

We would do well to remember this woman's attitude as we offer our own prayers to God. We are sinners. The wages of sin is death. It is only because of the grace of God that he blesses us. Do you remember the Pharisee and the publican who prayed to God. The Pharisee prayed that he was thankful that he was not like other men. He expected God to answer his prayer because he was better than others. The publican lifted up his hands to heaven. He admitted that he was a sinner and cried out for God to be merciful to him. Let us ask God for his help rather than demanding that he bless us.

Mar 7:31 And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

Mar 7:32 And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

Mar 7:33 And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;

Mar 7:34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that

is, Be opened.

Mar 7:35 And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

Mar 7:36 And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;

Mar 7:37 And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

The Lord then moved from the region of Tyre and Sidon to the sea of Galilee. On the way he passed through Decapolis, which means ten cities. By this time it was impossible for him to go anywhere in the land of Palestine without being surrounded with a host of persons seeking help from various infirmities. The deaf, the blind, the lame and even those who had lost loved ones to death itself came to him for miraculous cures. It appears that he was somewhat selective in deciding whom to cure and when to cure them. He normally had a lesson to teach when he provided a miracle of healing.

As he passed through the area of Decapolis, a man who was deaf and was not able to speak plainly was brought to him. They asked Jesus to lay his hands upon the man in order that he might be able to hear and speak.

The Lord heard their plea. He took the man aside and did a very strange thing. He placed his fingers in the ears of the man, then he spit and

touched the man's tongue. He looked upward toward heaven and said, "Eph-pha-tha" which means, "Be opened." Right away the man's ears were opened that he might hear and his tongue was loosed that he might speak plainly. We would say today that the man had been deaf and dumb. Most of us have seen persons suffering from this problem. What a relief it must have been to the man and to his friends who had brought him to Jesus! They could hardly contain themselves for joy. Although Jesus asked them not to tell anyone about it, they went everywhere telling of the miracle.

They were astonished beyond measure because of Jesus miraculous powers. He had made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. Even today when the age of miracles has passed, Jesus can perform providential wonders for those who will allow it. I challenge the reader to look back at the events of his life and see if God's providence has not worked quietly in the background to bless his faithful child and see that things worked out for both the child and the Father in heaven.

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Chapter 8

Mar 8:1 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

Mar 8:2 I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:

Mar 8:3 And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

Mar 8:4 And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?

Mar 8:5 And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

Mar 8:6 And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.

Mar 8:7 And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.

Mar 8:8 So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.

Mar 8:9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

The eighth chapter of Mark first deals with Jesus feeding of four thousand persons with only a

few small fishes. Then it discusses Peter's confession that Jesus is the Son of God and the importance of taking up our cross and following him

As we follow the life of Christ we find two outstanding trends. The first is the gathering of the multitudes as they sought to share in the miracles which the Lord performed. The second is the ever increasing hatred of the scribes, lawyers, Pharisees and Saducees. As his popularity increased the resistance of the religious leaders increased along with it, until it ended with his death upon the cross. This conflict between Jesus and his opponents becomes quite clear in this eighth chapter of Mark.

In verse one we find that a great multitude of people has gathered around the Lord because of his having caused the blind to see, the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. If these people had been at their homes they would have had food to eat. They had left their homes to follow Jesus and thus they were becoming hungry because they had no food.

Jesus does not want anyone to suffer as a result of following him. As he looked out across the crowd he had compassion upon them. He said, *They have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far.*

Jesus disciples were astonished at what he had said. How would it be possible to satisfy such a multitude of persons when they were not near a

source of much food? I find this interesting. They had seen Jesus do so many wonderful things which were completely impossible for other men that it seems they would have simply said, Lord, we know you can feed them if you decide to do so.

But this is common to men. We have seen the prophecies of the coming of Christ fulfilled. Isaiah, Micah and others in the Old Testament foretold the coming of the Messiah and his Kingdom. Yet men today pay little attention to the prophecies of Jesus and the apostles that tell us of a coming judgment which will see the separation of the wicked and the righteous. Men do not strive to be ready to meet him when he comes a second time to send the sheep to their eternal reward, and the goats to the agony of hell fire.

Jesus asked the doubters how many loaves of bread they had. The reply was that there were seven loaves. He then took the seven loaves and gave thanks. He began to break the loaves in pieces. As he did so his disciples took the bread and distributed it to the multitude. There were also a few small fishes. He commanded the disciples to set them before the people also. When they followed his directions the entire assembly of persons ate until they were filled. Then they took up seven baskets of food which were left over.

Again we have a lesson for our day. Christians often have doubts about their ability to feed the millions of people on this earth today with the bread and the water of the gospel. The two main objections are that the people are not hungry for the gospel, and that the task is impossible to perform.

We cannot go unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. The creatures will not listen and the world is too large. The fact of the matter is that God has given a command and his disciples are to obey that command. Then it will be up to God to deal with matters. Examples such as the one we have just examined indicate that God can do far more than we realize.

Mar 8:10 And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

Mar 8:11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

Mar 8:12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

Mar 8:13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

Jesus left the area then to sail to a place called Dalmanutha. As soon as he arrived the Pharisees were ready to meet him. They demanded that he provide them with a sign from heaven. The fact of the matter is that they did not truly desire a sign of his divinity. Instead, they were tempting him and hoping to trap him in some way.

Jesus sighed within himself at their constant effort to destroy his influence. Then he asked them a question. Why did they constantly ask for a sign from heaven? He informed them that there

would be no sign given to that particular group of people. If they had been really seeking a sign of his authority, he might have provided one. They were not really looking for one and he would not provide one.

Mar 8:14 Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

Mar 8:15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

Mar 8:16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.

Mar 8:17 And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?

Mar 8:18 Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

Mar 8:19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.

Mar 8:20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.

Mar 8:21 And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

He left them, and entering into the ship again, he departed across the sea of Galilee to the other

side. As they were traveling, the disciples reminded Jesus they had only one loaf of bread in the ship. What were they to eat? Jesus replied that they were to take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. This was just one more example of Jesus' special way of teaching. While they were hungry for physical bread and drink, he would teach them concerning spiritual food and drink. Men who are hungry sometimes reach out for poisonous food. The disciples must be sure not to listen to the poisonous spiritual leaven of the Pharisees and they must hunger and thirst for the food and drink which he, the Son of God, offered to them.

The Master then chided them for not having understanding hearts. Here they were wondering what they would eat. They had just seen a large number of people fed with a small amount of food. He could certainly provide for all of their needs if they would only have confidence in his ability and his willingness to care for them. How was it that they still did not understand.

Mar 8:22 And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

Mar 8:23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

Mar 8:24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

Mar 8:25 After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

They came then to Bethsaida. A blind man was brought to Jesus and those who brought him begged Jesus to touch him and cause him to see. Is it not interesting that men can so easily see the physical blessings God makes available to us and yet they have such a hard time realizing the value of the spiritual blessings he offers? If you can feed their stomach, the crowd will mill around with their mouths open wide. If you offer to fill their soul, they too often wander away disappointed.

Jesus did not let the rejection by the Pharisees and scribes prevent him from reaching out to the people. When the blind man was brought to him he took the man by the hand and led him out of the town. He then spit upon his eyes and put his hands upon him. He asked the man a question. Could he see anything. The man replied that he was able to see a little bit. He could see men walking as if they were moving trees. It seems clear that he had been partially healed from his blindness. He was seeing everything in a blur. Jesus went further. He put his hands upon the man's eyes and caused him to look up. When he looked upward his sight was completely restored and he saw everything clearly.

May I suggest another lesson. Could Jesus not have caused the man to see clearly when he first treated him? Why did he need a second effort to cause the man's eyesight to be perfected? Notice what Jesus told the man to do before he treated him

the second time. The man was told to look upward toward heaven. I believe Jesus was impressing the man and all those who were looking on that the healing was not the result of men's power. It was due to the power of God.

The man was told to go to his house and not to go into the town or tell it to anyone in the town. We are not told why Jesus sometimes told those he cured to go and tell others what had been done for them, while at other times such as this, he told them not to tell anyone what had been done. Some believe he knew human nature well enough to realize that if he commanded them not to tell anyone, they would go everywhere telling everyone. I doubt this. I believe it had something to do with the press of the multitudes around him. Perhaps it was necessary to control the number of persons who came to him for help.

Jesus was constantly moving from place to place. He next went to Caesarea Philippi. While they were on the way he asked his disciples who men were saying that he was. Jesus no doubt knew what men were saying. He wished to focus the disciples attention on what men were saying about him.

Mar 8:26 And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

Mar 8:27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

Mar 8:28 And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others, One

of the prophets.

Mar 8:29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

Mar 8:30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

They came back and answered him with several responses. There were some who believed he was John the baptist brought back to life. There were others who thought he must be Elijah or one of the other prophets. The people had great respect for John the baptist and for the various Old Testament prophets. This brings to mind the Mount of Transfiguration when Moses, Elijah and Christ all appeared together. The disciples wanted to build a temple for all three. God caused both Moses and Elijah to fade from sight. He then declared Jesus to be his own Son in whom he is well pleased. They were to hear him. The same is true here. Jesus is not in the same class with either John the baptist or the prophet Elijah. Jesus will make that point clear.

Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ." This was not unusual for Peter. Very often it was Peter who first reacted. It was he who jumped into the water to meet Christ who was coming toward them. It was Peter who ran to the tomb and entered in first. It was Peter who impulsively said, "Thou art the Christ." Jesus agreed that this was correct, but told them they were not to tell men of this fact at that time. Again this is probably

due to the need for him to accomplish a number of things before his life was ended on the cross. If the disciples had pushed the matter too rapidly he might have had more difficulty getting the things he needed to do done.

Mar 8:31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Mar 8:32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

Mar 8:33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

Mar 8:34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Mar 8:35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

Mar 8:36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Mar 8:37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Mar 8:38 Whosoever therefore shall be

ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Jesus told them that the future was full of sorrow. He would have to suffer many things at the hands of his enemies. They would finally kill him and after three days he would rise again. Peter began to scold him for making such a statement. Jesus told Peter to get behind him. Peter failed to understand how God did things. He was seeing through the eyes of men. He was actually serving Satan when he denied that Christ would have to die for the sins of men.

Not only would Jesus die. The disciples would have to take up their cross and follow him. If they lost their lives in doing so, they would actually gain everything. If a man gains the whole world and loses his own soul, he has lost everything. If he loses the world but follows Christ unto the end, that man has gained all. When the Son of man returns in the glory of the Father with the holy angels, he will be ashamed of those who loved the world more than eternal life.

Of course the opposite also holds true. When Jesus comes again, he will be proud of those who have sacrificed all here on earth in order that they might be invited to enter into the joy of the Lord in the city where there are no tears, no sorrow and no night.

Chapter 9

Mar 9:1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

As chapter nine begins we find Jesus saying that some of those who were standing there with him would not die before they had seen the Kingdom of God come with power. The Lord knew that great changes lay just ahead for God's people. The apostles who were at his side would be filled with the Holy Spirit and would begin baptizing people into the body of Christ. He would be taken away into heaven and they would continue the wondrous miracles which he had done while he was with them. The kingdom of God was to arrive on the day of Pentecost in A.D. thirty-three in the city of Jerusalem. Some of them would still be alive.

Mar 9:2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

Mar 9:3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

Mar 9:4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

Mar 9:5 And Peter answered and said to

Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

Mar 9:6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.

Mar 9:7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

Mar 9:8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

Six days after Jesus had made this statement about the coming of the Kingdom of God, he took Peter, James and John with him to a high mountain. As they stood there upon the mountain Jesus appearance was changed. The Bible says he was transfigured. His clothes became whiter than any fuller on earth could make them. In other words, Jesus shone with the glory of heaven.

Then the wonder became even greater. Moses and Elijah, who had been dead for many long centuries appeared to them. Elijah, Moses and Christ were talking with one another. Peter was always the one to quickly react to situations. Sometimes he acted too quickly. This time he made what many Jews would have thought to be a wonderful idea. He suggested that three tabernacles be built in honor of the three great leaders. There would be one for Elijah, one for Moses and one for Jesus. Apparently this was the first thing which came to

his mind. We are told that Peter, James and John were all afraid and Peter was not certain just what he should say.

The three apostles were about to hear a lesson which all of us should learn very carefully. A voice came out of the clouds and said, *This is my beloved Son. Hear Him.* Then Moses and Elijah faded from sight and only Jesus remained before them. Moses was the great lawgiver. Elijah was the prince of the prophets. Yet neither of them was in the same class as the Son of God. We must learn from the law and the prophets. But today we live in the Christian age. We are to hear Jesus Christ.

Mar 9:9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

Mar 9:10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

Mar 9:11 And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?

Mar 9:12 And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.

Mar 9:13 But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

Mar 9:14 And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and

the scribes questioning with them.

Mar 9:15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

Mar 9:16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

As they came down from the mountain Jesus charged them that they should tell no man what they had seen until he had been raised from the dead. After his resurrection the picture would change. They would then be responsible for telling all the world about this experience. As a result, we have the record in our Bibles where all men can read about it any time they wish to pick up the Holy Book.

The apostles were confused. They knew the Old Testament had prophesied that Elijah would come to prepare the way of the Lord. Since Elijah had not come back, surely it was not yet time for the Kingdom to be established. Jesus explained to them that Elijah had already come and he had been mistreated and abused. He was talking about John the baptist coming in the spirit of Elijah.

Luk 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

The four of them came down from the mountain and found that a large multitude of people had

gathered around the rest of the apostles. The scribes of the law were asking them questions. Jesus asked them what they had in mind as they questioned his followers.

Mar 9:17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

Mar 9:18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

Mar 9:19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

Mar 9:20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

Mar 9:21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

Mar 9:22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

Mar 9:23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

Mar 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

Mar 9:25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

Mar 9:26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

Mar 9:27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.

Mar 9:28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

Mar 9:29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

Then one of the multitude came forward and brought his son who was under the control of an evil spirit. The son foamed at the mouth and gnashed his teeth. He was pining away and losing weight. The man had asked the apostles to help and they had not been able to do so. When the son was brought to Jesus the evil spirit caused him to fall upon the ground, wallowing about and foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked how long this had been going on. He was told that it had been since the young man was but a child.

Jesus told the man all things were possible to those who believe. The man replied that he did believe. Jesus commanded that the evil spirit come out of the young man. When the spirit came out, it

left the man lying on the ground as if dead. Many said he was dead. Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up. He arose and went on his way.

The apostles were amazed. They had tried to cast out the evil spirit and they could not do it. What was the difference between them and Jesus that he could do that which they could not do? Jesus replied that the spirit which he had cast out could only be removed by prayer and fasting.

We live in a different age today my friends. Jesus and the apostles had special power which was given to them to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. This has already been done now and those miraculous powers are no longer needed for the confirmation of the gospel as the Word of God. However; that does not mean that we do not have attitudes and behavior problems that are extremely difficult to cure.

Let me tell you of a person who was very dear to me who was at times possessed by the spirit of the Devil. His condition was not quite the same as those from whom Jesus cast out devils, but it was certainly the result of Satan's influence. This man was a hard worker. He cared for his wife and for his children. He did not lie nor steal. In many ways he was a very good man. He did have one very serious behavior problem. He could swear like a sailor and practically turned the air blue when things went wrong. This man became a Christian late in his life. He took it more seriously than many do. It was clear to him that a Christian should not use the name of the Lord in vain. From the

day he became a Christian those around him did not have to listen to the ugly words which he had used before. The power of Jesus Christ had cast out the spirit of the Devil which had dwelt in him in those earlier days. May I add that there were many prayers said to God for him that made a difference in his life. Jesus was right. Some devils only come out through much fasting and prayer.

If more of the earth's population were to believe Jesus to be the Son of God and would place their confidence in his power, this globe would be a much finer place to live. The time of miracles has passed, but the power of Jesus to change men's lives is still available to those who will trust in him with all their heart. Lord, help our unbelief!

Mar 9:30 And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.

Mar 9:31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

Mar 9:32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

The death of the Lord was drawing ever closer. He and his disciples passed through the region of Galilee where he taught them that he would be delivered into the hands of sinful men who would kill him. Jesus had the power to see into the future and know what would take place. I am convinced

that he knew he would be crucified on a cross even before he was sent from heaven to earth to set up his Kingdom. Would you and I have been willing to sacrifice ourselves and suffer as he did for the sins that others committed. Only God and his precious Son could be so unselfish.

Jesus knew also that death would not be the end for him. After he had been murdered he would remain in the grave until the third day and then he would be raised up on that third day to prove to man that victory over death is possible. His disciples had seen the dead raised by their Master. Even so, they were now bewildered by his saying that he himself would rise from the dead. They were afraid to ask him about what he had said. It was nearly impossible for them to imagine one with such power as Jesus had would be murdered by his enemies.

Mar 9:33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

Mar 9:34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among them-selves, who should be the greatest.

Mar 9:35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

Mar 9:36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

Mar 9:37 Whosoever shall receive one of

such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

It is strange that men and women can continue to hold on to their foolish ways even after having walked with Jesus for some time. As they came close to Capernaum, the disciples had been disputing among themselves as to which of them was the greatest. I suppose all of us wonder at times just how great we are. These disciples were about to be shocked by Jesus definition of true greatness. They had a very wrong idea of what was necessary in order to qualify as being great.

Jesus sat down and gathered the twelve around him and began to speak to them. He said, *If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all.* You see dear friends, the man or woman who serves is the one upon whom others depend. He or she is the one who is most important in seeing that all things work for the good of everyone. According to this definition of greatness, Jesus himself was the greatest of all. Although he is the Word of God and was in the beginning with God, he came to earth with the real answers to all of man's problems. He is Lord of all. Yet he became servant of all. He is our example of genuine greatness.

Jesus took a small child and held the child in his arms in front of the disciples. He told them that whoever received such a little child in his name received him, and in receiving him they also

received the Father who had sent him. The little child represents helplessness. Since the child cannot care for itself, others must care for it. Jesus was saying that those who care for others who have need of that care are actually caring for him, and for Jehovah himself.

Mar 9:38 And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us.

Mar 9:39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

John then told Jesus they had seen a man who was casting out devils in the name of the Lord. Since the man had not been following along with Jesus and the apostles, they had told the man not to cast out devils. Jesus told them they must not forbid him. Any man who truly did a miracle in his name would speak highly of him. They needed to be opposed to those who were working against him rather than those who were truly working miracles and giving him the credit for doing it.

Mar 9:40 For he that is not against us is on our part.

Mar 9:41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

Mar 9:42 And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

Mar 9:43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

Mar 9:44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Mar 9:45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

Mar 9:46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Mar 9:47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

Mar 9:48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Jesus often praised those who serve others in his name. He declared that *Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you he shall not lose his reward.* His point was that those who assist Christians are not forgotten by God. Some of the simplest things done for a deserving follower of Christ may turn out to be far more important than we think they are. Who would dream that offering a cup of cold water to a thirsty Christian would

be considered important in the eyes of the Creator of heaven and earth? Yet Jesus said one who did such a loving act would be noted and rewarded for that action.

But there is another side to that story. Whosoever shall offend one of Jesus little ones who believe in him places his soul in serious danger. It would be better for the person who hinders the disciples of Jesus if they had a millstone tied around their neck and be cast into the sea and drowned.

Just how important is it to be on Jesus side rather than to be against him? The Lord left little doubt about this. He used the example of our own body to show how serious it this in the 47th and 48th verses.

Mar 9:49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

Mar 9:50 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

I suppose, my friends, that we have little understanding of just how wonderful heaven will be, or how horrible hell will be. I value my hands and my feet very highly. I would not want to have to face life without one of my hands or one of my feet. Surely those who have had to live without a hand or a foot can see the truth of what Jesus was teaching.

Those who stand in the way of Christians and

cause them to stumble and fall away may not feel the full effects of what they have done in this life. They will surely feel the full effect when the Son of man comes back in judgment. Hell is real. Hell is eternal. Hell is pure agony. You do not want to go there. Help Jesus followers. Do not hinder them.

The chapter closes with Christ talking about men being salted sacrifices. Acceptable human sacrifices are lives that have been properly salted. If they have proven to be the salt of the earth, they will bring flavor to the lives of others. They will find peace.

Chapter 10

Mar 10:1 And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.

Mar 10:2 And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.

Mar 10:3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

Mar 10:4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

Mar 10:5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

Mar 10:6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

Mar 10:7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

Mar 10:8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

Mar 10:9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

We have now made our way through nine of the sixteen chapters of the book of Mark and we are ready to investigate chapter ten. One of the very important lessons Jesus kept constantly before his apostles was that there is a vast difference between greatness in the eyes of the world, and greatness in

the eyes of God. One may be enormously successful in the sight of men and still be a complete failure in the sight of the Judge of all the earth. There is much in this tenth chapter that deals with that same lesson. We need to hear it well.

If one takes a map of the holy land and traces the journeys of the Lord it becomes clear that he spent much time near the sea of Galilee and the Jordan River. That is where we find him as this chapter begins. As usual, the people had gathered to hear his teaching and witness his wonderful miracles. He did not disappoint them. He began to teach them as he had done before.

But Jesus was never able to escape the hawklike eyes of the Pharisees. He was entirely too popular to suit them. They were intensely jealous of the attention he was getting from the public. They watched constantly to see if they could find something in either his teaching or his actions that they could use to destroy him.

This time they had a question for him. They wanted him to tell them whether it was permitted under the law of Moses for a man to put away his wife. They should have known better than to try to trap Jesus concerning the teachings of the law of Moses. He knew the law far better than they did. The difficulty with them was that they were too filled with pride to recognize they had met their match in the Son of God.

Jesus replied with a question of his own. He said, *“What did Moses command you?”* In other words he was saying to them that they were supposed to be

experts in the law of Moses. What did they teach about the matter? They told him Moses had allowed men to write a bill of divorcement and then they could put away their wife. Jesus then explained to them why Moses had allowed divorce. It was not that it was right. It was because the hearts of men were so hardened against the truth that God permitted it. Rather than approving divorce God had made one man and one woman in the beginning. He expected a man to leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife. They were then to be as one flesh. They were joined together by God and no man was to separate them.

Mar 10:10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.

Mar 10:11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

Mar 10:12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

The disciples were not completely satisfied. After they were separated from the crowd they asked Jesus to explain farther. He explained that a man who put away his wife and married another committed adultery against her. Not only that; he added that a woman who put away her husband and was married to another man also committed adultery against her husband.

If we compare what Jesus said here with what

is recorded in Matthew chapter 19, we find that there is only one exception to that general rule. If the spouse has committed adultery, that spouse can be put away and the innocent party is free to marry another.

After this they brought some young children to Jesus in order that he might touch them. The disciples apparently thought this was a nuisance to Christ. They rebuked those who had brought the children.

Mar 10:13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

Mar 10:14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Mar 10:15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

Mar 10:16 And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

It is not wise to rebuke those who bring little children to Jesus. The cries of babies in Bible study and worship services is music in the ears of our heavenly Father. Jesus quickly let it be known that he wanted the little children to come to him. The entire kingdom of God is made up of little children. Anyone who did not receive the kingdom as if he were a little child would never be able to enter into

it. Childlike humility is a necessary quality of those who would become citizens in the city of God.

Mar 10:17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

Mar 10:18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.

Mar 10:19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

Mar 10:20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

Mar 10:21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

Mar 10:22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

Mar 10:23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

Mar 10:24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the

kingdom of God!

Mar 10:25 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.

Mar 10:26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

Mar 10:27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

The next event related in this great chapter of Mark is that of a man who came running toward the Lord and kneeled before him asking what he could do to inherit eternal life. The man called Jesus “Good Master.” Jesus told him there was but one “Good Master”, that was God. He reminded the man of the commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Do not commit adultery. Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud your brother. Honor your father and mother. The man informed Jesus he had been keeping all those commandments from childhood.

Jesus then shocked the man. He told him there was still one thing which had not been mentioned. He needed to sell whatever he had and give to the poor. Then he would have treasure in heaven. The man was invited to take up his cross and follow Jesus. That was more than he could handle. He went on his way without doing what Jesus had said was necessary. He had great riches which he was not willing to give up. When the apostles heard and saw what had happened they also were shocked.

Jesus informed them that it was very difficult for men with riches to enter the kingdom of God. Men who have vast riches tend to place their confidence in the power of their wealth. Then they ignore the doorway of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus added that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

The apostles had about decided no one could enter into the Kingdom. They asked who then could be saved. Jesus replied that men might find it impossible but that God can do that which man finds impossible.

Mar 10:28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

Mar 10:29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

Mar 10:30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

Mar 10:31 But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

Now we find the impulsive Peter speaking up again. How often Peter spoke before he thought! This is just one more example. Peter seems to

have had just a hint of pride in his voice when he pointed out to Jesus that the apostles had left all they had to follow Jesus. He was obviously asking Jesus if that was a guarantee that the apostles would receive great rewards for having placed Jesus ahead of their fishing boats.

Jesus did not give him a direct answer. He did not tell them they were ready to reap tremendous riches because they had given up much to follow him. He simply stated a principle which applied to all men. Every man who had sacrificed anything near and dear to him for the sake of the gospel would receive blessings far greater than that which he had given up. Persecutions and loss of goods in this life might cause the world to look upon a man as last among men. God did not see it that way. He who placed himself last would be first before God.

It is very difficult for men to learn this great lesson that Christ presented to his disciples. If the reader will notice what happens in most congregations of religious people, the ones who put in the largest contributions are treated very carefully in decision making. That is not the way it should be. The poorest member of the congregation should be heard just as quickly as the richest. We may be confident that God does not rate men and women by the size of their bank account. Nor does he appreciate it when we rate them in that way.

Mar 10:32 And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed; and as they followed,

they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

Mar 10:33 Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:

Mar 10:34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

Jesus and his apostles began to move toward the city of Jerusalem. The Lord knew that death waited for him in that city. His life on earth was fast drawing to a close. He began to explain this to those he loved. He told them that when they arrived in Jerusalem he would be taken before the chief priests and the scribes. They would condemn him to die and would turn him over to the Gentiles. Then he would be mocked and scourged and spit upon. They would finally kill him. Nevertheless, the third day after his death he would rise from the grave.

These were no doubt difficult words for the apostles. It was hard for them to accept the fact that one who could control the sea and heal the sick as Jesus had done would be treated so shamefully by those who hated him. Surely he would be able to bypass this terrible suffering and shame.

Whatever the case, they were ready to look toward the future. Whether Jesus avoided persecution

and death, or whether he was murdered and came back from the grave, they wished to share in his future glory. James and John in particular asked him if he would do them a favor. Jesus asked them what it was they wanted him to do for them. They answered that they wanted to sit on his right hand and his left hand in the glory days which were to come.

My friends, men are too prone to seek glory. Jesus had been attempting to teach throughout this entire chapter that the way to glory was through service. If a man wanted to be greatest in the Kingdom of God it would be necessary for that man to become a servant to others. Jesus was right. The greatest men of all time are those who have given the most to others. The greatest are not those who have controlled the greatest wealth. They are not the ones who have commanded the largest armies or who have owned the largest number of slaves. They are those who have given of themselves for God and their fellowman. We are reminded that the greatest of all was he who gave himself upon the cross of Calvary that our sins might be removed. No one is greater than he.

Mar 10:35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

Mar 10:36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

Mar 10:37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

Mar 10:38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

Mar 10:39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:

Mar 10:40 But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.

Mar 10:41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

Mar 10:42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

Mar 10:43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

Mar 10:44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

Mar 10:45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

The Lord told James and John that they really did not know what they were asking for. He had a cup of suffering which they would not like to drink.

He had a baptism of death ahead which they would not want to share. The fact of the matter was that they would indeed share in both his suffering and in death at the hands of those who hated truth. But, if they truly wanted to have a place of prominence and glory in the land of endless day, they must prepare themselves to receive it. That preparation would have to come by becoming ministers to others. Just as the Son of man had come to minister unto others and to give his life as a ransom for sinners, they must also become servants of all if they looked forward to sitting in the chief seats in glory.

Mar 10:46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.

Mar 10:47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

Mar 10:48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.

Mar 10:49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.

Mar 10:50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

Mar 10:51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do

unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

Mar 10:52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

As they moved toward Jerusalem they came to Jericho. A blind man called out to Jesus. “Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!” Some of those nearby scolded the man and told him to be quiet. They saw him as a disturbance. What right did a blind beggar have to interrupt the progress of the Lord? It did no good for them to hush his voice. He cried out again for Jesus to have mercy upon him.

Jesus stopped and commanded that the blind beggar be called into his presence. They did as Jesus required and told the man to be of good comfort. Jesus had actually called for him. Jesus asked the man what he desired be done for him. He replied that he wished to receive his sight. Jesus told him to go on his way. His faith had made him whole. The man immediately began to see. He followed Jesus.

Many persons are spiritually blind today and are seriously in need of having their eyes opened to the truth. Pray for them! Some of them will call out for Jesus and will be caused to see the Son Light.

Chapter 11

Mar 11:1 And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,

Mar 11:2 And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.

Mar 11:3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

Mar 11:4 And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.

Mar 11:5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?

Mar 11:6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

Mar 11:7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.

This eleventh chapter begins with Jesus approaching the city of Jerusalem along with his disciples. The Lord was perfectly aware of the fact that the end of his life in the flesh was drawing very near. He still had much to do and had very little time in which to do it.

One can look directly across the valley from the city of Jerusalem and get a clear view of the Mount of Olives. It is not a high mountain. It looks much like some of the larger hills in Tennessee. At the foot of the Mount of Olives, just across the mountain from Jerusalem, was the village of Bethany. Bethany was the place where Mary and Martha lived. Both of these ladies were dear to the heart of Jesus. By passing around the base of the mountain the small band would soon see Jerusalem come into view.

The Lord chose two of his disciples and told them to go into the village of Bethany. As soon as they arrived they would find a colt that had never been ridden by anyone. They were to untie the colt and bring it to Jesus. If anyone asked them why they were taking the colt, they were to reply that the Lord had need of him. As soon as they explained that need, the owner of the colt would be quite willing to send it.

Here we have another grand lesson from the gospel record. If Jesus has need of anything we possess we should be ready and willing to offer it to him. You may say, "This has little to do with me. I do not own a colt. Anyway, Jesus died about twenty centuries ago and he has not asked me to give him anything." It may well be true that you do not own any livestock. It is certainly true that Jesus does not live in the flesh on this earth. But it is not true that Jesus has never asked you to give him anything. Jesus has asked each of us to give him our very lives as living sacrifices. He

has not asked us in person, but he has asked us through the pages of the New Testament. When the invitation comes to you from the Lord, you should be just as quick to offer yourself, as the owner of the colt was to send it to Christ.

It happened just as Jesus predicted. As they were untying the colt, those who stood by asked them what they were doing. They replied that Jesus had commanded them. They were allowed to take the colt to Christ.

Mar 11:8 And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.

Mar 11:9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

Mar 11:10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

Then a strange set of events began to take place. The disciples spread their garments over the back of the colt and Jesus sat down upon him. Others spread garments in his pathway and cut branches off trees and strewed them along his pathway. Some went ahead of him, and some went behind him. As they moved along they cried out saying, *“Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.”*

The word “Hosanna” means “Save, we pray.” It can be used in two different ways. It can be a

cry for help. It can also be a way of praising one who is able to do for us that which we cannot do for ourselves. It was probably a combination of both as the disciples used it while moving toward Jerusalem with the Master.

But that was not all they cried out. They said,

“Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

The Jewish people were confident that some descendant of King David was to come and set up a kingdom which would never be destroyed, but which would last forever. They had good reason to believe that. We need to notice a prophecy which was spoken by Zechariah. Zechariah said,

“Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”

It is little wonder then that these disciples cried out “Hosanna.” The king of salvation had come and they knew it. They had seen the wonderful miracles of the Lord. They had also heard wisdom from his mouth which could never have been produced by a human mind. It was perfectly proper for them to praise his name and pray that he might save them.

Oh that men today would see as clearly as those

disciples did on the road from Bethany to Jerusalem! This world could be transformed in short order if men and women were to recognized just who Jesus is. Let us give him honor, and glorify his name both with our words and with our deeds.

Mar 11:11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

Mar 11:12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

Mar 11:13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

Mar 11:14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

At this time the Lord did not stay in the city of Jerusalem. Once he arrived in the city he went to the temple. He looked around carefully at many things, and then went back to the village of Bethany with the twelve apostles.

It makes us wonder what Jesus was thinking as he entered into the city after his triumphant march amidst the palm branches and the loud Hosannas. It is sometimes dangerous to guess when the Bible does not tell us all we might like to know. This time I do not think we are wrong in doing just a

before Christ would be betrayed by Judas and those Christ Christ would be betrayed by Judas and those hypocritical Pharisees and priests who had been so jealous of him from the beginning. Jerusalem had been a favored city of God for hundreds of years. No city on earth had been given the opportunities city on earth had been given the opportunities Jerusalem had. This was where the temple of God was built. This was where one prophet after another had predicted the coming of a King of kings, a Prophet greater than Moses, and a Priest greater than any High Priest who had ever existed.

Jerusalem had not listened very well. Jesus knew full well that in a matter of hours he would be beaten, spit upon, mocked and crucified between two thieves.

At the same time, the Lord must have thought of those millions of persons who would come to him as subjects in his great spiritual kingdom. His death would make it possible for their sins to be washed away. And so he would have to face the hour which was not far off. It was the Father's will. He would obey it.

The next day he started out again from Bethany toward Jerusalem with his apostles. This time he saw a fig tree which looked healthy and had many green leaves on it. When he came to the tree, there was no fruit on it. There was nothing but leaves. The reason it did not have figs was that it was not yet the time for the figs to appear. Jesus said to the fig tree,

“No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever.”

Why was this event placed in the Biblical record? Let me suggest that Jesus may well have been thinking of the failure of Jerusalem to produce the fruit that it should have brought forth. It had been planted, watered and nourished. It was now time that the city should be producing fruit for God. Instead, it had proven barren and unfruitful. Let us be certain that our own lives do not fit that pattern. We have received much from the Lord. We should be bearing fruit for him.

Mar 11:15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

Mar 11:16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

Mar 11:17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Mar 11:18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

Mar 11:19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.

When they entered into the city of Jerusalem Jesus went into the temple and began to cast

out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and also the seats of those who sold doves. He reminded them that Jeremiah had warned about defiling God's house. It was intended to be a house of prayer. Yet they were making it a den of thieves.

We are told that those who sold merchandise in the temple were making a grand profit at the expense of those who had come to worship. The doves were the sacrifice of the poor who had not enough to offer a lamb or an ox. The doves that were being sold could have been sold outside of the temple. However, I believe the main problem was that these profit grabbers were charging far more for the doves than they were worth. Jesus called the merchants thieves.

Mar 11:20 And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

Mar 11:21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

Mar 11:22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

In the evening they left the city again. As they returned to Bethany the apostles noticed that the fig tree had withered away. What strange power Christ had that he could merely speak to the fig tree and it withered and died! Jesus explained to them that men could accomplish far more than they realized if they would simply have faith in God. He said

that they could say to a mountain, “*Be ye removed.*” and it would be cast into the sea. Since we have no record of any man who gave such a command and moved a mountain, we must assume Jesus was talking in symbolic terms. There are many many mountains of trial and tribulation which must be overcome by weak and frail men. Jesus meant to give courage and comfort to everyone who faces the very kind of difficulties that he himself was to face in a very short time. He would overcome death itself. We must follow his example. Such a victory will require that we offer many prayers of faith.

Mar 11:23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

Mar 11:24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

Mar 11:25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

Mar 11:26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

But the Lord said it is not enough that we pray for that which we desire. Our sins have made a separation between ourselves and God. Before God can answer our prayers he must be willing to forgive us of the sins that we have committed when we walked in our own selfish ways. Now if we expect God to forgive us of our sins, we must not only be sorry for them; we must be ready to forgive those who have sinned against us. We need not reach our hands up to God in heaven and ask for his good will, if we refuse to hear the plea of those who have offended us and wish to receive our forgiveness.

Now this is a very easy thing to say. It is much, much harder to do. I can still remember times when my parents punished me for something that my brothers did. I hope that I have completely forgiven them for that unjust treatment. But it still bothers me because I even hold it in my mind.

Jesus showed by his own example just what he expected of us. Somewhat later, while he was hanging on the cross between the two thieves, he indicated that the one who repented of his evil way of life would be with him that very day in Paradise. Here was a man who had defiantly stolen from others. The law of God said, "*Thou shalt not steal.*" Nothing could be clearer. The Lord could have said, "You are forever consigned to the fires of hell." He forgave the thief. He expects us to follow that example.

Mar 11:27 And they come again to Jerusalem:

and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,

Mar 11:28 And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

Mar 11:29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

Mar 11:30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.

Mar 11:31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?

Mar 11:32 But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.

Mar 11:33 And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

As the Lord went into the temple area again, the chief priests, the scribes and the elders met him in fury. They wanted to know who had given him the authority to overturn the money changer's tables and scatter the doves. Jesus answered their question by asking one of his own. He demanded that they tell him whether the baptism of John was authorized by men or by God. They realized that if they said it was merely the doctrine of men

they would face the wrath of the people. The people believed John to be a great prophet. On the other hand, if they said John was authorized by God to call out for men to be baptized, they would have to tell why they had not followed John's preaching and been baptized.

When they answered that they could not tell

Chapter 12

Mar 12:1 And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

Mar 12:2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

Mar 12:3 And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.

Mar 12:4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.

Mar 12:5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.

Mar 12:6 Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

Mar 12:7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

Mar 12:8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

Mar 12:9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

Mar 12:10 And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders

rejected is become the head of the corner:

Mar 12:11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Mar 12:12 And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

As this twelfth chapter opens we find Jesus relating another parable to his listeners. He told about a man who planted a vineyard and did all that might be expected in order to reap a fine harvest from his vineyard. When everything was ready he let out the vineyard to one who was expected to care for it and see that all was kept in order. The owner then went to another area.

When the time of the harvest arrived the owner of the vineyard sent one of his servants to receive the profits from the vineyard. Things did not go well. When the servant arrived he was beaten and run off. The owner then sent another servant. This time the servant was killed. After this happened one time after another, the owner decided to send his own son to see about the matter. When the son arrived the husbandmen decided that since this was the heir of the property, if they killed him they could take the vineyard for their own. And so, they killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

Jesus then asked a piercing question. What did his listeners think the owner of the vineyard would do about it? Did they not think he would come and destroy the husbandmen and give his

vineyard to others who would take better care of it? Jesus point was that he was about to be killed by the very ones whom God might have expected to care for his kingdom. He quoted a passage from Psalms

Psalms 118:22. The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.

Mar 12:13 And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.

Mar 12:14 And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?

Mar 12:15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it.

Mar 12:16 And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and super-scription? And they said unto him, Caesar's.

Mar 12:17 And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

They would certainly not serve their purpose by killing the Son of God. God's vineyard would be protected. It would be taken from the care of the

Pharisees and scribes, and it would be given over into the hands of those who would take better care of it. Jesus words infuriated the Pharisees. They would have killed him then and there except for the fact that they were afraid of Jesus disciples. They decided to go their way for the moment and tend to Jesus a little later.

In order to do this they sent certain of the Pharisees and the Herodians to him to ask him questions and try to trap him in his answers. They were very clever about it. They first commended him by saying they knew very well that he spoke truth and that he did not fear any man when it came to the love of that truth. Perhaps he did not even fear Caesar. Did he think it was right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should they pay taxes or not?

Jesus saw through their hypocrisy immediately. He told them to bring him a Roman coin. When they brought it, he asked them whose picture was engraved upon it. They replied that the image was that of Caesar. He then told them to give Caesar that which belonged to Caesar and give to God that which belonged to God. That took care of that question. Taxes belonged to Caesar. Worship belonged to God. They were astonished at his wisdom.

Mar 12:18 Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

Mar 12:19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto

his brother.

Mar 12:20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.

Mar 12:21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.

Mar 12:22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.

Mar 12:23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.

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

Mar 12:25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

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

Mar 12:27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

But they were not through with him yet. They had another question that they thought would be impossible for him to answer. Just how well did he know the law of Moses? They would find out. They

proposed a situation in which a woman had lost her husband to death. They pointed out that if a woman's husband died, his brother was expected to marry her and raise up children for the dead brother.

They then suggested a completely impossible scene. Suppose a woman's husband had died without leaving children. Then his brother married her and he also died without children. This supposedly happened until seven brothers had all married her. None of them had children by the woman. Then the woman herself died. The question of the Pharisees was, "Who of the seven will be her husband in heaven? All seven of them had her for a wife while she was alive."

Jesus had no more difficulty with this question than he had about paying taxes to Caesar. His answer was that they had made a serious error in thinking things in heaven were like things on earth. They did not know either the scriptures or the power of God. After the resurrection there will be no marriage. Those who enter into the presence of God will be similar to the angels. They should have taken note of the statement of Moses that in the time of the burning bush, God had told Moses that he was the God of the living. He was the God of Abraham, and of Isaac and of Jacob.

Mar 12:28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment

of all?

Mar 12:29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

Mar 12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

Mar 12:31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Mar 12:32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

Mar 12:33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

Mar 12:34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

You see, my friends, we mortals here on earth are not in a position to ask the kind of questions the Pharisees were asking Jesus. Time will come to an end. Earthly conditions will be replaced by a new existence. We would do well not to spend too much time trying to solve God's problems for him. He can manage that all by himself.

The Pharisees should have known by that time they had met their match. Men cannot debate with the Son of God. His mind has been exposed to the experience of all eternity. Ours has only a few short years to draw from. One can expect to be embarrassed beyond measure if he decides to pit his own human wisdom against the mind of God.

One foolish scribe of the law decided to give it another try. He should have known better by this time. He asked Jesus the question, "*Which is the first commandment of all?*" It could have been put another way. "What is the most important commandment of all? Jesus wasted no time in letting him know the answer to his question. The first commandment is to "*Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.*"

If a person would follow that guideline everything else would follow just as the night follows the day. The tax problem would be solved. The marriage problem would be solved. Life would become rich and meaningful.

The Lord did add another thought. There is a second commandment which stands out in importance. That second commandment is that God's people are to love their neighbor as themselves. Notice the emphasis upon love in both of these commandments. One is to love God. One is to love his neighbor. What a wonderful world this would be if all men followed God's two greatest commandments!

We might notice that Christ had shot an arrow directly into the heart of those hypocrites. They did not love their fellow man.

The scribe was humbled. He recognized the truth in Jesus words. He admitted that Jesus had spoken rightly. If one were to keep the two greatest commandments, it meant more than all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices which had been made under the law of Moses.

I think we might also add that much of this is still true today. One might attend church services every time the door is open and still have no real love for either God or man. Such a person's life would be vain and empty in the sight of Jehovah.

As Jesus listened to the scribe's admission that he spoke the truth, the Lord told him he was not far from the Kingdom of God. At that point the Pharisees and scribes decided to cease their attempts to entrap the Lord by outsmarting him. They found out that approach did not work at all. They dared not ask him any further questions.

Mar 12:35 And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?

Mar 12:36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Mar 12:37 David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

Christ then began to teach in the temple. He turned the matter around. He began to ask the questions rather than answer them. His question was,

“How do the scribes say that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

The point of this question was that it was strange that the scribes would call the Messiah the son of David if he was also his Lord. Psalm 110:1 is the verse to which Jesus referred. The Old Testament prophecies could come together only if the Messiah was both a descendant of David and also the one who would sit on God's right hand until every enemy of righteousness had been conquered. After this the common people heard Jesus gladly, even though the scribes of the law and the Pharisees were white hot with anger.

Mar 12:38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,

Mar 12:39 And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:

Mar 12:40 Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

Mar 12:41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

Mar 12:42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

Mar 12:43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

Mar 12:44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

The Lord did not quench that anger, but only increased it by what he said next. He told the people that they must beware of the scribes who loved to parade around in long and flowing robes where everyone could see them. They were doing that to receive the praises and salutations of men. In the meantime they were busy devouring the goods of widows and others who were poor. Jesus made it clear that they were not laying up treasures in heaven. They were moving in the direction of damnation.

About that time a poor widow came along and cast a small amount of money into the treasury of God. The rich had been passing by and putting in large amounts. Jesus explained that the widow who had cast in only two mites had contributed more than all of the rich persons put together. The reason he had come to that conclusion was that the rich had not made a true sacrifice. They had only given of that which they had left over after taking care of all their own desires. This was not true with the

poor widow. She had actually put in money that could have bought some of the necessities of life.

My friends, the heart of the Christian religion is unselfishness. The Devil and his angels are bent on getting all they can. It matters little if someone suffers because of their greed. Love is a foreign word to their vocabulary. When one loves, that person who loves is willing to give up some of what could have been his or her own. If the person had chosen to spend it on self, that could have been done.

Jesus did not live that kind of life. His entire existence on earth was an example of self-sacrifice. He did not have to leave the happiness of heaven to come to this world filled with sin and sorrow. He did so because he loves us and cannot bear to see us in the anguish of an everlasting hell. Through the life, the teachings and the death of our Lord, we have been given the power to break the bands of sin and escape the torment which awaits the Devil and his followers. We must use the freedom which Jesus has made possible for us in praising his name and responding to his love with our own.

I have lived now for over seventy-one years. Those years have taught me a number of very important lessons. One of those lessons is that we find in men and women a very complicated mixture of selfishness and concern for others. At one time we may find an individual showing compassion for the poor and lonely. At another time we may find that same person trampling over the welfare of a fellow worker by making him or her look bad in the eyes of a supervisor. Our lives almost appear

to be foot soldiers, marching in two armies at the same time. Jesus Christ will give a command that we recognize as being pure and holy. We quickly obey that command and later rejoice that we heard him and obeyed. Then Satan holds up the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life in front of us. That same person who has been so happy in the service of God then turns and licks the boots of the Devil. It is hard to believe such things could happen. But they do!

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Chapter 13

Mar 13:1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!

Mar 13:2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Mar 13:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

Mar 13:4 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

This time we will be studying the thirteenth chapter of Mark. It is one of the most fascinating chapters in all of the Word of God. It speaks about the end of the world and the events which will take place at that time. God is going to draw the curtain on this present heaven and earth. Each of us will need to be prepared.

This chapter deserves the closest attention we can give to it. Therefore, let us enter into our study of this very critical chapter of the book of Mark.

In verse one we find Jesus in the city of Jerusalem. He had been in the great temple there and was about to leave it when one of the disciples said to him,

“Master, see what manner of stones and what

buildings are here!”

No doubt the disciple expected to hear a reply that the temple was so well built that it would endure for many centuries in the future. If that was the expected reply the disciple was to be shocked by the words which Jesus uttered in answer to his statement. Jesus told him the great buildings which were within his view would be brought down. The time would come when not a single stone would be left sitting on top of another.

It was not far across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives. They made their way across the valley and sat where they could easily look back at the temple. Peter, James, John and Andrew must have been reflecting upon the words Jesus had spoken previously. They decided to ask him privately just what he meant. They wanted to know when the destruction of the temple would take place, and how men might know this destruction was near. It all seemed so impossible that they were very curious as to how and when such an amazing event could take place. They may well have thought that only the end of the world could bring such destruction.

The Lord warned them not to let anyone deceive them. A number of things must take place before the end came. If they were not careful they would find themselves caught up in the words of deceivers who would trouble men unnecessarily.

Right here it is necessary to notice that as Jesus talked about the end time, he mixed information about the destruction of the Jewish temple with

information about the end of this present heaven and earth. It seems that Jesus wanted to teach his disciples two things at the same time. The Jewish heaven and earth would come tumbling down. Gentile rule would replace it. The temple would be demolished and the massive stones of the temple would come tumbling down. But, at the same time, there was another ending which was far more important. That would be the end of the creation which was begun at the time of Adam and Eve.

Mar 13:5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:

Mar 13:6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Mar 13:7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.

Mar 13:8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

Jesus went on to say that men would become excited about the end when some came saying they were the Christ. Such men would deceive many of the people and send them into a panic. They were not to believe every false prophet who came along trying to gain a following.

One of the things which would cause many to think the end was near would be the occurrence of

terrible wars. Thousands of people would be killed and hideous events would take place. Such things would happen again and again before the end. There would be much talk about the possibility of national conflicts. That did not mean the end was at hand.

Not only would there be wars and rumors of war as nations rose and fell before one another; there would be natural disasters such as earthquakes and famines. Again the deceivers would take advantage of the panic of the people and try to persuade them the end had arrived. They were not to place confidence in these peddlers of fear. Such earthquakes and famines would be followed by many other terrifying troubles before the Lord returns.

Mar 13:9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

Mar 13:10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

Mar 13:11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

The next words spoken by Christ must have been uttered with a tear in his eye and a lump in his throat. He declared that his followers would

be delivered up to councils and would be beaten in the synagogues of the Jews. They would be brought before kings and rulers to be punished for preaching the gospel and serving in his Kingdom.

Then Jesus told them of something which should have braced their hope and given them much confidence. They were to preach the Word to the world. The end would not come until that had happened. Every nation must hear the Word of God before the Creator would draw the curtain and bring human history to a close on earth.

The Lord told his inspired apostles that they must not fail to do their part in preaching his gospel. When they were brought before the princes and rulers of the nations they were to boldly proclaim the truth regardless of the consequences. In fact, they would be given the help of the Holy Spirit who would make certain that what they said was that which God wished for them to say

Mar 13:12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

Mar 13:13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Mar 13:14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:

Mar 13:15 And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:

Mar 13:16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

Mar 13:17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

Mar 13:18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

Mar 13:19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

Mar 13:20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

As the preaching progressed, many conflicts would arise between those who believed and those who did not believe. Even families would be torn apart as brothers caused their own brothers to be killed. Parents would hate their own children. Children would rise up against their parents. Christians would be hated by many just because of their faith in the Son of God. They were not to let such things cause them to turn away. Those who were faithful unto death would receive a crown of life.

Jesus then referred to something which Daniel

the prophet had predicted centuries before the time of Jesus. In the ninth chapter of his Old Testament book, Daniel had prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed. Its walls and its streets would have to be rebuilt. The Messiah would come to make an end of sin, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to make reconciliation for iniquity. The Messiah would come, and he would be killed before Jerusalem was made desolate.

But when the time of Jerusalem's desolation did come, things would be most horrible. The Jews would not even have time to enter into the houses and remove their possessions. Those who were laboring in the fields would not have time enough to pick up garments that they had laid aside. It is clear that the answer Jesus was giving to his apostles was an unexpected response. Those who had asked him the question about how they would know when the temple was to be demolished must have been much surprised. The destruction of the temple would come suddenly and without many warning signs.

In A.D. 70 the Roman army came to Jerusalem and did just what Jesus was predicting would happen. The Jews suffered terrible anguish as the city was attacked and destroyed.

The Lord warned that those who were nursing children would be especially tormented. This came true. The famine was so great inside the city that two women are said to have agreed to kill one of the women's child and cook and eat it. Then, when that child was consumed, they would do the same to the other woman's child.

Mar 13:21 And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not:

Mar 13:22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

Mar 13:23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

When the destruction of the temple came, they were to recall that the Lord had warned them ahead of time. They were not to listen to the false prophets who would use such an occasion to claim they were the promised Messiah.

They might well pray that these things happen in the days of summer rather than in the bitter cold of winter. The affliction would be worse than any the Jews had faced from the time of creation until that day. If the Lord had not intervened and brought an end to the suffering not a single soul would have remained alive. But, because of those who had elected to serve in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, the suffering would be ended in order that the gospel could be spread to the rest of the world.

I think we must ask a very serious question now. Why did God allow his chosen people to undergo such terror? The answer to this question is that after all the advantages they had enjoyed over the years as he worked with them through the law and the prophets, they had rejected his Son. They had

closed their eyes and their ears to his Word. They had hardened their hearts and decided to follow their own ways rather than his. This is sin. The wages of sin is death. They were being paid that which God had promised.

After the destruction of Jerusalem the Christians would need to be extremely cautious when deceivers came, claiming to be the Christ. They would bring forth many signs and wonders. The result would be that many would be deceived into following these children of Satan. Jesus then pointed out that the warning had been given. It would be necessary to take heed. There would be no excuse for being entrapped.

Mar 13:24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,

Mar 13:25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

Mar 13:26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

Mar 13:27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

Mar 13:28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:

Mar 13:29 So ye in like manner, when ye

shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

Mar 13:30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.

After the days of the tribulation of Jerusalem, and after the false Christs arose, deceiving so many, the end of the world would come. This time it would be more than the surrounding of Jerusalem by the Roman armies. The entire created universe would be annihilated. The sun would become dark. The moon would no longer shine. The very stars of heaven would fall from their places and the gravitational forces which held all thing in place would be shaken.

My friends, this is not talking about the destruction of Jerusalem. This is talking about the end of the heavens and the earth which God created in the beginning. There are two destructions discussed in this thirteenth chapter of Mark. One is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies. It took place in A.D. 70. The other is the end of this present heavens and earth. It will not take place until time reaches it's end.

Verse thirty is a difficult verse. It appears on the surface to say that both the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world would take place during the lifetime of the apostles. I believe the words refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, about which the apostles had inquired. They would be able to see signs that the demolition of the temple would take place. But they would not

have any means of knowing the day or the hour when Christ would return and the old heaven and earth would pass away.

Mar 13:31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

Mar 13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

Mar 13:33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

Mar 13:34 For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

Mar 13:35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

Mar 13:36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

Mar 13:37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

When this physical world comes to an end, men will see Jesus Christ, the Son of God appearing in the clouds with great power and glory. Luke recorded in the first chapter of the book of Acts that Jesus ascended into the clouds as the apostles watched him leave. Two angels then appeared to the apostles and asked them why they stood there

gazing into the heavens. The same Jesus who had been taken up from them into heaven would come back in like manner to that in which he left. Mark is describing that return in these last verses of his thirteenth chapter.

A trumpet will sound and Jesus will return in the clouds of heaven. He will then send his angels to gather his elect from every corner of the earth to be with him in heaven. In the twinkling of an eye they shall be caught up to meet him in the air and enjoy their mansion which has been prepared for them.

When the Christians see the sun darkened, the moon cease to shine, the stars fall from their place in the heavens, and Jesus Christ appearing in the clouds at the sound of the trumpet, they shall know the end is at hand. These things will come to pass. Although the present universe will be replaced by a new heaven and a new earth, the Word of God will never fail.

Jesus warned his apostles, and all of us who have lived, or will live after them, that no man can predict the time of his coming. For that reason all of us should watch lest he come and find us sleeping. Watch and pray dear friends, that you may be ready when he comes.

Chapter 14

Mar 14:1 After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.

Mar 14:2 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.

As our study continues, we draw closer and closer to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God upon the cross. This chapter deals with Jesus being anointed with perfume by a loving disciple, his last supper with the apostles, and his arrest and betrayal by Peter. It is a rich and moving chapter. Study with us, and let us consider it together.

The chief priests and the scribes never gave up in their attempts to destroy Jesus Christ. This chapter begins by telling us they were making careful plans to kill him. The problem was that they were afraid the people who believed in Christ would rise up in his defense if they were to take him prisoner at the time of the Passover feast. They decided to wait until it had passed by.

Mar 14:3 And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.

Mar 14:4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?

Mar 14:5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

Mar 14:6 And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

Mar 14:7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.

Mar 14:8 She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

Mar 14:9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Jesus had gone to the house of a leper named Simon. Many would never have gone to a house where leprosy was known to be found. Jesus did not worry about that. While he sat eating his meal with Simon, a woman came and opened a box of precious ointment. She then poured the ointment upon his head. Some of those present were very disturbed that Jesus did not scold the woman for wasting the perfume. They declared that it could have been sold for a great deal of money. The money could then have been used to care for the needs of the poor. Their attitude is not surprising. Jesus constantly cared for the needs of the poor. His silence when the perfume was apparently wasted did not fit very well with his previous concern for

the downtrodden.

The answer the Lord gave was that they were not to trouble her. She had made an effort to show her affection for him. Although she did not know it, she was actually preparing him for his burial. He knew his time was short. His disciples did not know this yet. Christ added that wherever the gospel was preached throughout the entire world, the actions of this woman would be told. And of course we are telling it today.

Mar 14:10 And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.

Mar 14:11 And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

The emphasis upon the value of the perfume may well have caused Judas' mind to turn in the direction it went next. It was not for love of the poor that Judas objected to what the woman had done. This evil man carried the money bag for the entire group. He thought more of the money than he did of the welfare of Christ. Judas went to the chief priests and made arrangements to betray the Son of God. They promised to give him money. He promised to make it convenient for them to kill the Lord. May I remind you my friends, that Judas is not the only one who has betrayed Jesus Christ for money or possessions. Be careful and do not

fall into that trap!

Mar 14:12 And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?

Mar 14:13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.

Mar 14:14 And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

Mar 14:15 And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.

Mar 14:16 And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

As the time of the Passover Feast arrived, the apostles asked Jesus where he desired that they should eat the feast together. Jesus told two of them to go into the city and they would meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. They were to follow him. When he went into a house, they were to follow him and ask the master of the house where the guest chamber was. They were to tell him that Jesus wished to observe the Passover Feast in that guest chamber with his disciples.

Everything was done as the Lord commanded. Permission was given to use the room. They prepared to eat the Passover Feast together.

Mar 14:17 And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.

Mar 14:18 And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.

Mar 14:19 And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?

Mar 14:20 And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.

Mar 14:21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

In the evening, as the group sat down around the table to eat, Jesus made a shocking statement. One of the twelve would betray him. This must have been a rude shock for Judas. How much did the Lord know about what he had done? Nevertheless, it did not cause Judas to change his plan of action. He still cared more about the money he had been promised than he did about the Lord.

One by one the apostles began to ask him,

“Is it I?”

Jesus answered that it was one of those twelve

who were gathered around the table and eating from the same dish of food. He then added that it had been prophesied that the Son of man would be betrayed at the hands of sinful men. But even though it must come to pass, there would be great woe to the man who actually betrayed him. It would have been better for him if he had never been born. Again we are made to wonder what must have been going on in the mind of Judas. I would not want Jesus to make such a statement about me. I do not believe any of the present readers would hear such an accusation against them without shaking in their boots. It did not, however, stop Judas.

Mar 14:22 And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.

Mar 14:23 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

Mar 14:24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

Mar 14:25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Mar 14:26 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

Jesus then took bread. He broke it and passed it out to the apostles. He told each of them to partake of it. It represented his body. Then he took the cup from which they had been drinking and passed it

around. They were told to drink from that cup; it represented his blood of the New Testament, which was to be shed for many. He also told them he would not drink the fruit of the vine with them again until he did it in the kingdom of God.

That, my dear friends, was the first time the Lord's Supper was ever shared by the followers of Jesus Christ. Untold millions have eaten it together for about two thousand years now. They will continue to do so until Jesus returns at the end of time. We must remember that Jesus also said that wherever two or three were gathered together, he would be in the midst of them. The kingdom of God is here today. Jesus is with us when we share the Lord's Supper in our worship services.

After they had finished the Passover Feast, they sang a hymn and left the guest chamber to go to the the Mount of Olives. That was a favorite spot for Christ. He often went there to pray. It lay just across the Kidron Valley from the walls of the city of Jerusalem. The city would have been in plain sight of Jesus and his friends.

Mar 14:27 And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

Mar 14:28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

Mar 14:29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.

Mar 14:30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily

I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Mar 14:31 But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

Jesus made another shocking statement to them. He had said before that one of them would betray him. Now he said all of them would scatter from him in fear. It had been prophesied that the Shepherd would be smitten and the sheep would be scattered. This is found in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. The Lord then told them he would be risen and would go into Galilee where they would see him. Remember friends, that some of the apostles were fishing in the sea of Galilee when Jesus appeared to them after his resurrection.

Peter was embarrassed. Quickly he replied that if everyone else denied his Lord, he would not deny him. Jesus replied that before the cock had crowed twice, Peter would deny him not just once, but three times. With great energy, Peter repeated his promise. He was joined by the rest of the apostles. All were agreed that they would be faithful to the very end.

Mar 14:32 And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

Mar 14:33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;

Mar 14:34 And saith unto them, My soul

is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.

Mar 14:35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

Mar 14:36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

Mar 14:37 And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?

Mar 14:38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.

Mar 14:39 And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.

Mar 14:40 And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.

Mar 14:41 And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Mar 14:42 Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

Jesus then took Peter, James and John with him into the Garden of Gethsemene and told them to sit nearby while he prayed. The three soon began to be sleepy. Jesus informed the three apostles that he was sorrowing unto death itself. He told them

to tarry where they were and to watch carefully. He then fell upon the ground and prayed that if it was possible the cup of grief which he was about to drink might pass away. Nevertheless, if it was not possible, he was ready to follow the will of his Father in heaven.

He then noted that the three had fallen asleep. He said to Peter, "Could you not watch for even an hour?" He urged him to watch and pray, for great temptation was just ahead. His spirit might be willing to die with Christ. His flesh would not be strong enough to keep his promise.

The Lord then prayed again, saying the same words he had said before. He came back and again found them asleep. He told them to just go on sleeping. The hour had come when he would be betrayed into the hands of sinful men. Then he woke them and called for them to follow him. His betrayer had arrived.

Mar 14:43 And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

Mar 14:44 And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely.

Mar 14:45 And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him.

Mar 14:46 And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

Mar 14:47 And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

Mar 14:48 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me?

Mar 14:49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

Mar 14:50 And they all forsook him, and fled.

Mar 14:51 And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:

Mar 14:52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

Mar 14:53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

While he was still speaking Judas came with a multitude who had swords and staves. They had been sent by the chief priests and scribes and elders of the Jews. Judas had told those with him that they would know which one to take in the dimness of the night by the fact that Judas would kiss him. What a horrible way to betray the one who loved us enough to die for us. Judas was proving himself to be a son of the Devil, not a child of God. As soon

as Judas kissed Jesus, the soldiers laid hands on him and arrested him. Peter was still true to his promise. He took a sword and cut off one of the soldier's ears.

Jesus asked the soldiers why they had come with swords and staves to take him. He had been with them in the temple and they had not taken him. The only reason they could take him now was in order that the scriptures which had forecast these events would be fulfilled. At that point all of the apostles forsook him and fled. Peter fled also. Peter no doubt felt completely confused after Christ told him to put up his sword.

One young man who had been following Jesus had only a single garment wrapped around him. The fearful things that were happening terrified him. When Jesus attackers laid hold on him, he fled and left his single garment behind him.

Mar 14:54 And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.

Mar 14:55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.

Mar 14:56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.

Mar 14:57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,

Mar 14:58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made

without hands.

Mar 14:59 But neither so did their witness agree together.

Mar 14:60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?

Mar 14:61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

Mar 14:62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Mar 14:63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?

Mar 14:64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

Mar 14:65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

They then led Jesus before the High Priest who had assembled the chief priests and scribes. They were ready to put Jesus to death, but he had committed no crime worthy of death. Peter followed at a distance. He stayed outside and warmed himself before a fire. There were many accusations made against the Lord. One of them was that he had

said he would destroy the temple and build another within three days. One said one thing. Another said another. The witnesses did not agree.

The High Priest questioned Jesus. Did he not hear all these things which were being said about him? Did he not intend to answer the charges? Did Jesus really claim to be the Messiah or Christ? Was he saying he was the Son of God? If so, the High Priest considered that to be blasphemy against God! Blasphemy was a sin punishable by death.

Jesus was not intimidated or fearful before the question he had been asked. He was the Son of God. He was proud to claim it. He said,

“I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting upon the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

That was sufficient for the High Priest. He asked if everyone had heard what Jesus had said. He should die!

Then the mob began to mock and mistreat Christ. They spit upon him. They covered up his face, beat him and then called out for him to tell them which one had slapped him. No guiltless person was ever treated any more shamefully than Jesus the Christ.

Mar 14:66 And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest:

Mar 14:67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And

thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.

Mar 14:68 But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.

Mar 14:69 And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.

Mar 14:70 And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaeen, and thy speech agreeth thereto.

Mar 14:71 But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.

Mar 14:72 And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

Peter was not far off in the palace warming himself before the fire. One of the maidens saw him and claimed that he was one of Jesus followers. Peter answered that he did not even know what the maiden was talking about. Then the cock crew. It was morning. Another maiden added her voice to what had been said before. She said, *“This is one of them.”* Peter denied it again. Some of those who stood near said to Peter, *“Surely you are one of them. Your speech shows it?”* Peter went all they way then. He began to curse and swear, saying *“I*

do not know this man about whom you speak.” The cock then crew the second time. Jesus words had been fulfilled. Peter, who was so determined that he would not betray his Master, had denied three times before the cock crew the second time to tell of the new day.

Peter then remembered what his Lord had said. When he thought about what he had done, he wept bitterly. I wonder how many other men, who thought they were strong enough to withstand any and all temptation, have done just what Peter did. We need to constantly pray to God for strength to resist the Devil.

Chapter 15

Mar 15:1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

Mar 15:2 And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto them, Thou sayest it.

Mar 15:3 And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.

Mar 15:4 And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee.

Mar 15:5 But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.

We are ready to begin our examination of the fifteenth chapter of the book of Mark. At about dawn Peter had denied three times that he was a friend to Jesus. Now it was morning and the chief priests, who had fought Christ so intensely, held a meeting with the elders, the scribes and the entire Jewish council. They bound Jesus and took him to Pilate the governor.

The first thing Pilate asked Jesus was whether or not he was the King of the Jews. Jesus replied very simply, "*Thou sayest it.*" This was about the same thing we hear sometimes these days. We often use the expression, "You said it." Jesus was telling Pilate he had the right idea. He, Jesus, was the King of kings and Lord of lords. He did not have to say it. Pilate had already said it for him.

Then the chief priests accused the Lord of many things. All the while Jesus stood silently and refused to argue with them. He knew very well that it would do little good to present his side of the matter. He was headed for the cross and he was ready to accept that fate. This falls right in line with the prophecy made by Isaiah that he would be led to the slaughter like a lamb, dumb before the shearer. Only those who have dealt with sheep will realize completely what Isaiah was predicting. When I was a young boy we owned a large pasture and rented it to several different farmers who owned sheep. I remember well that a sheep would sometimes get into the watering tank. When the wool became wet the sheep would sometimes lie down in the water tank and drown rather than make any effort to escape from it. Jesus was ready to go to the cross for you and me.

Mar 15:6 Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

Mar 15:7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

Mar 15:8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.

Mar 15:9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

Mar 15:10 For he knew that the chief priests

had delivered him for envy.

Mar 15:11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

Pilate was amazed that Jesus remained silent. Did Jesus not realize Pilate had the power of life and death over him? It almost seems as if Pilate realized he was about to do something which was terribly wrong. He thought he saw a way out of killing an innocent man. It was a custom at this feast that one prisoner could be released and pardoned from his sentence. Pilate pointed out that there was a prisoner named Barabbas who was a convicted murderer. Pilate wanted to know if it would not be wise to release Jesus and let Barabbas be put to death. Pilate realized the chief priests had brought Jesus to him because of their envy and jealousy, and not because he was a leader in setting up a kingdom which was to fight against the Roman empire. The chief priests became so angry that they stirred up the people to cry out for the death of Jesus. They wanted Barabbas, the murderer, to be released. Pilate then asked what they wished to be done with Jesus Christ whom the priests had called "The king of the Jews." The answer that came ringing back was that Pilate must "*Crucify him! Crucify him!*"

Mar 15:12 And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

Mar 15:13 And they cried out again, Crucify him.

Mar 15:14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

Mar 15:15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

Pilate was insistent. He wanted evidence that Jesus had committed some crime worthy of death. He asked the multitude, “Why should he be crucified? What evil has he done?” There was no way of pacifying either the chief priests, the elders or the mob who cried out for Jesus death. They only cried out even louder, “*Crucify him. Crucify him!*” When Pilate saw there was no other way out, he pacified the people by ordering Barabbas released and Jesus to be scourged and crucified.

I think we must take just a moment to think about the suffering which scourging caused. Strong men were given the duty of laying repeated stripes across the back of the one who was being scourged. Sometimes pieces of sharp metal were tied to the end of the leather thongs which were used in the whipping. The entire back often became one bloody mass of torn flesh. It was not all that unusual for the victim to die from the scourging alone. Jesus, our Lord, went through this agony before he even arrived at the place of the cross.

Mar 15:16 And the soldiers led him away

into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.

Mar 15:17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,

Mar 15:18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

Mar 15:19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.

Mar 15:20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

Mar 15:21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

Mar 15:22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

Mar 15:23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

Mar 15:24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

The soldiers then led Christ into a hall where he could be embarrassed before an entire band of men who enjoyed seeing others tortured. They put a purple robe on him. Purple was the color worn by kings. He claimed to be a king. They would laugh at his claim and see just how much power

this staggering man was able to show them. They braided a crown made from thorns and jammed it down upon his head. After all, a king ought to have a crown. What fun the enemies of the cross were having. As the blood flowed down from the puncture wounds made by the thorns they could laugh at Christ, salute him, and cry out,

“Hail, king of the Jews.”

Friends, I find this picture almost too gory to let our minds dwell on it. I have never enjoyed seeing animals butchered. I met my wife while in a group singing at the tuberculosis hospital in Nashville. I can recall what it was like to this day, some fifty years later. The pain racked bodies of those who were in advanced stages of tuberculosis were most pitiful. My imagination is much too clear when I think of what Jesus was going through. I find it almost impossible to understand how brutality can be enjoyable to anyone. But particularly, I find it absolutely impossible to think of the Son of God, who had never committed sin, being caused to endure such humiliation and pain as is described here by Mark.

They took a reed and struck him on the head with it. They spat upon him. They bowed their knees before him and acted as if they were humbling themselves before royalty. When they had ridiculed him as completely as they knew how, they took off the purple garment, put on his own clothing again, and led him toward the cross to be crucified.

While they were on the way to the place called Golgotha, which was also called the place of the

skull because of its connection with death, they met a man called Simon. It seems that Simon did not even know Christ. Jesus was so weak by this time he was stumbling and ready to fall from the beating and loss of blood. Someone was needed to take the load from his shoulders and carry it for him. Simon was drafted for that purpose. My friends, do you remember singing the Song, "Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free?" The answer to that question is that Jesus did not bear the cross alone. Simon carried it for him. Each of us is invited to take a part in bearing the load which Christ took upon himself. When things go wrong and become almost more than you can bear, remember that you are walking in the same path that the Son of man walked. Rejoice that you are allowed to walk with him. Simon did it. You can too.

They placed him upon the cross and then the soldiers offered him wine, mixed with myrrh. This is thought by some to have been a pain killer. It hardly seems to fit with the rest of the story. Everything to this point was done to increase Jesus suffering. Did the soldiers have a change of heart? I hardly think so. It is true that he refused to take the potion. Whether this was because it was a pain killer and he was determined to take the full agony upon himself without easing the pain, or whether he was too weak to swallow it, I do not know.

While he hung there upon the cross, the soldiers parted his garments among themselves and cast lots for them, deciding which garment each soldier might take. Usually when we see pictures of Jesus

on the cross, the artist has covered his nakedness with a brief piece of cloth. It is just possible that he had no covering at all, and that he was completely exposed to his tormenters.

Mar 15:25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

Mar 15:26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Mar 15:27 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

Mar 15:28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

Mar 15:29 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,

Mar 15:30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

Mar 15:31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.

Mar 15:32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

It was the third hour of the day when they nailed him to the cross and placed a sign over his

head which proclaimed him to be THE KING OF THE JEWS. If we are correct that the Jewish day began at six in the morning, Jesus was nailed to the cross at nine o'clock, three hours before noon.

What a sight this was. There were three men crucified that day. Two of them were known thieves. The other was the Son of God. God's Son was in the middle. A thief hung on each side. It has been this way from that day to this. The sinless Saviour came to seek and save that which is lost. Some accept his offer of salvation. Others mock and ridicule him. Isaiah said in his fifty-third chapter that the Saviour would be numbered with transgressors.

Even those who passed by the cross entered into the mockery. They also railed upon him and shook their heads, challenging him to build up the temple in three days if he could. They had misunderstood his statement that if he was killed, God would raise up the temple of his body after three days. They felt it would be utterly impossible to build such a building as the temple in Jerusalem in a period of three days. Many still do not believe Jesus body was raised up from the grave. They will be much surprised when they meet him in the judgment.

The chief priests were beside themselves with joy. They and the Pharisees reminded everyone that Jesus had said he came to save others. They wanted him to demonstrate his great power to save others by jumping down from the cross to which he was nailed. If he would come down from the cross they would be much more ready to believe him.

Mar 15:33 And when the sixth hour was

come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

Mar 15:34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Mar 15:35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.

Mar 15:36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

Mar 15:37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

Mar 15:38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

Mar 15:39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

At the ninth hour of the day, or three o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus cried out with a loud voice and said, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.*" In our English language this would be the question,

"My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?"

Some of those who were nearby heard what he said and decided he was calling out for Elijah the prophet to come and help him in his hour of trial. He was not calling for Elijah. He was asking help from the Father in heaven. Someone then placed a

sponge on a reed and offered him a drink of vinegar. Right after that Jesus cried out with a loud voice and his spirit left his body. He was dead!

At the very moment of his death a marvelous thing took place. In the temple there was a thick curtain separating the holy place from the most holy place. Only the high priest was allowed to pass beyond that curtain to make certain sacrifices to God. When Jesus died that thick curtain was torn from top to bottom without a man touching it. Jesus had passed beyond the curtain. He alone would be the High Priest in the new age. The Mosaic age was over. The Christian dispensation had begun.

Mar 15:40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;

Mar 15:41 (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

We are not told just how many women were present at the time of the death of our Lord. We do know that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the less and Joses were there. Salome seems to have been a third woman who is identified by name. In addition to these three, there were many others who had believed and followed him into Jerusalem as he prepared to give his life to obtain possible salvation for others.

Mar 15:42 And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,

Mar 15:43 Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.

On Friday, the day before the sabbath one named Joseph, who was from Arimathaea, a man of dignity and character came to Pilate and fearlessly asked that the body be released to him. He had waited patiently for the establishment of the Kingdom which God had promised. It would be interesting to know what passed through Joseph's mind when Jesus died. Did the man grasp what Jesus had said about being raised on the third day? Did he only love Jesus enough to want the Lord buried with honor? God did not reveal Joseph's inner thoughts to us.

Mar 15:44 And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.

Mark does not tell us of the soldier who came and broke the legs of those on either side of Jesus in order to hasten their death, but who saw no need to break the legs of Christ because he was already dead. Pilate was somewhat surprised that he had died so quickly. It should not be surprising. He had nearly been killed by the scourging and the burden of the cross as he carried it until he could

not longer walk.

Mar 15:45 And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

Mar 15:46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

When Pilate was assured by the centurion that there was no doubt about Jesus being dead, he allowed Joseph to take possession of the body. Joseph cared enough for Christ that he gave him a fine burial. The Lord was wrapped in expensive linen and placed in Joseph's own sepulchre. This sepulchre was a cavity hewn into solid rock. It would have been large enough for more than one body.

After Jesus was laid in the sepulchre, a stone large enough that the women who came later were wondering who might move the stone for them was rolled up to seal the door of the sepulchre.

Mar 15:47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

There were two Marys there until the burial was completed. They deserve recognition for their love. It is a tragedy that certain critics of the Holy Scripture have suggested an illicit relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. It simply is not so! Jesus was without sin. He had rescued Mary Magdalene from evil spirits who had taken control of her at the time he met her. She never

forgot what he had done.

Would it not be wonderful if all men and women were as grateful as Mary Magdalene was. We can only dream of what life would be like, both in this world and the one to come!

Chapter 16

Mar 16:1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

Mar 16:2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

Mar 16:3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

Mar 16:4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

Mar 16:5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

Mar 16:6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

Mar 16:7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

This book is more brief than Matthew, Luke or John. For this reason it is packed full of truth in every sentence. The word “compressed” is a good one. The other three accounts of the life of Christ are inspired to just as great a degree as is Mark, but each account has its own purposes in the mind

of God. I particularly like this book because of its brevity.

Before moving into the sixteenth chapter of Mark, I would like to think back a little to the previous chapter. We cannot fully appreciate the sixteenth chapter without setting the scene for it. In the fifteenth chapter we have the description of the trial and crucifixion of the Lord. It is a gruesome scene. From the time Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, the scribes, the chief priests and the elders became jealous of him. This jealousy increased over the three and one half years of his ministry, until it reached a white hot level. Satan had infiltrated the hearts of pride filled men and had led them to absolute rebellion against both the Father in heaven, and the Son on earth.

They had taken the only begotten Son of God and accused him of both blasphemy for stating the truth that he was divine, and anarchy for saying that he had come as the promised King of the Jews. They had beaten him, mocked him, and in the end they nailed him to that old rugged cross at Calvary. If the story had ended there, Satan would have won. But Satan is not capable of gaining the ultimate victory over God. This last chapter of Mark tells us just how foolish it is to fight against the Creator of heaven and earth. We must look at it very carefully.

In the last chapter, Joseph of Arimathea had come to Pilate the governor and had received permission to take the body of Jesus and dispose of it. Being a disciple of Jesus, Joseph had taken the body and laid it his own new tomb which had

been hewn into the rock. He had caused a large stone to be rolled up to the entrance of the sepulchre to seal it.

Now, at the beginning of this last chapter we find two women coming to anoint the body of the Lord with sweet smelling spices. The sabbath had closed, and they had come very early in the morning on the first day of the week. In fact, they had come to the sepulchre at the very dawning of the day. The sun was just peeking over the horizon. It had been predicted that Jesus would rise from the dead on the third day. He was killed on Friday. This was Sunday.

The two women were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Salome. They had loved Jesus with a pure love for a long time. Their hearts were heavy as they approached the grave. I must add right here that women have been wonderful servants in the work of the Lord through every century from the one in which Jesus lived to the one in which we live. Although men have been allowed a more prominent role in the worship and teaching programs of the church, millions of women have quietly and faithfully done all they knew how to do in the service and glorification of the Son of man.

As the women came close to the tomb they were wondering how they might enter into it. The stone would be much too heavy for them to roll away from the entrance. What was their surprise but to find that when they got there, the stone had already been removed. They no doubt wondered who had gotten there before they did. Someone

with considerable strength must have opened up the tomb. Who could it have been?

They did not remain outside. They entered to do what they had come for. When they were inside the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right side of the area. He was clothed in a long white garment. They were very much afraid.

We are not told at this point that the young man they had seen was an angel. Nevertheless, if we examine the other three accounts of this part of the story of Christ, it becomes clear that they had seen an angel. Angels often appeared in human form. For example, it is recorded in the book of Genesis that Abraham saw three men, two of which are called angels, as well as a third person whom he called Lord.

The angel quickly comforted the women by telling them not to be afraid. He knew they were looking for Jesus who had been crucified. But they would not find him in the tomb. He had risen! The angel invited them to look at the place where Jesus body had been lying. They would not find him.

The angel then told the women they were expected to go and tell Jesus disciples that he had risen. They were to also inform the disciples that they were to go to Galilee. They would find the Lord there to meet them when they arrived.

For some reason, the angel requested that they be sure to tell Peter about it. Peter was to be very important in the very early days of the church. Perhaps this was an important link in seeing that Peter was ready when the time came

later to preach the first gospel sermon on the day of Pentacost. We also remember that Peter seemed to have been shaken up severely by the arrest of his Lord. Maybe it would be more important for Peter to find that Christ had won the victory over death than for anyone else to receive that news.

Mar 16:8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

Mar 16:9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

Mar 16:10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.

Mar 16:11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

Mar 16:12 After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.

Mar 16:13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.

Mar 16:14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

The women left the sepulchre, trembling with amazement and astonishment. Who had heard of

such things? Would anyone believe what they had just seen? What kind of commotion would result when they did what the angel had commanded and told the apostles and the rest of Jesus disciples? They were so fearful that they did not say anything to any man.

Mary Magdalene was one of the two women who first arrived at the empty tomb. But they did not see Jesus at that time. They only knew of his resurrection because the angel told them about it. As Mark continues his account, he tells us that Mary Magdalene was the very first one to see the risen Lord. What a time of excitement this must have been for Mary Magdalene. Mary's devotion to Jesus was a result of the wondrous change which had taken place in her life. Now she was privileged to be the very first to see the Saviour after he rose from the dead.

Mary wasted no time. She had failed to do what the angel commanded when he said to go tell Jesus disciples about his resurrection. Now she was convinced she must obey that command. She went and told those who had been with Christ while he was alive and on earth, and doing the will of his heavenly Father here. When she came to the disciples they were weeping and mourning. They had given up much to follow Jesus. They had every reason to believe they would never see him again. They were so convinced Jesus was parted from them forever that when Mary told them he had risen, and that she had seen him, they refused to believe her.

But that was not to be the last of Jesus appearances. Let me call your attention to the words

of Paul as he wrote to the Christians at Corinth.

1Co 15:1-8 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Yes, Jesus appeared to two men on the road to Emmaus who were discussing the strange things they had heard about claims that Jesus had escaped from the grave. He took fish and bread and ate with the two. Their hearts burned within them as they realized who their companion was. These two men had then attempted to tell others about what had happened to them. They also found it difficult to convince those whom they told that they were not telling a falsehood.

Jesus did not allow the matter to lay dormant. The eleven apostles had gathered to eat together. While they were eating, Jesus appeared in their midst and scolded them for not being willing to believe those who had told them of his resurrection.

He told them they were hard of heart and should have believed what they heard.

There were only eleven of them because Judas had been so filled with guilt when he realized that his betrayal of his Lord had resulted in his crucifixion that he had gone and hanged himself. He was no longer a part of the apostolic band.

Mar 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Mar 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Mar 16:17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

Mar 16:18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Jesus told the eleven they must complete what they had begun when they left other matters to follow him. Their work was not completed. It was just beginning. They were to see that the gospel was preached to every creature in all the world. We call this the great commission, and that is what it is. No one has ever received a more important challenge. Men are still giving much energy and time to see that those in every place and in every age hear about this wonderful Saviour who gave

his life in order that we might have forgiveness of our sins and live with him and the Father in glory forever. The command to preach the gospel to all the world is just as much a part of Christian life today as it was when Jesus first gave it.

Jesus did not leave his apostles powerless. The message they preached was so amazing they needed some means to convince people they were not lying about it. Jesus said there would be signs and wonders which would follow them. They would be able to cast out devils. They would speak in tongues they had not learned. They would be able to take up deadly serpents and even drink deadly poison without dying. They would also be able to lay hands on the sick and cause them to recover from their illness.


Mar 16:19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

Mar 16:20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Then the Lord was received up into heaven to sit down on a throne at the right hand of the Father. The apostles obeyed the command of their Lord. They went everywhere preaching the gospel and proving they were telling the truth by signs and wonders which they were able to demonstrate.

Jesus Christ is the Son

of the Living God!

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