

The Gospel Of Matthew



Sermon Outlines

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To God Be The Glory!

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The Gospel Of Matthew

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

1. The book of Matthew has always occupied a position of high esteem in the faith and life of the church:

“When we turn to Matthew, we turn to the book which may well be called the most important single document of the Christian faith, for in it we have the fullest and the most systematic account of the life and the teachings of Jesus.” (**William Barclay**)

2. The writings of the early church fathers reveal that it was...
 - a. The most frequently quoted
 - b. Perhaps the most widely read gospel...during the first two centuries of the church’s history

[Why was this book so popular? Perhaps we can understand why as we consider some background information pertaining to it...]

I. AUTHOR AND DATE OF THE GOSPEL

A. MATTHEW (LEVI)...

1. The apostolic origin and canonical rank of the gospel of Matthew were accepted without a doubt by the early church (**ISBE**)
2. Matthew, surnamed Levi, had been a tax-collector...
 - a. He became one of Jesus’ earliest disciples - **Mt 9:9; Mk 2:14**
 - b. He was chosen to be one of the twelve apostles - **Mt 10:2-3**
3. Having been such a close associate of Jesus during His earthly ministry...
 - a. Matthew’s gospel is a first hand account
 - b. Unlike Luke who depended upon other eyewitnesses - **Lk 1:1-4**

B. BEFORE 70 A.D....

1. Irenaeus says it was written when Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome
2. Eusebius states that this was done when Matthew left Palestine and went to preach to others (Historia Ecclesiastica, III, 24)
3. Clement of Alexandria said that the presbyters who succeeded each other from the beginning declared that “the gospels containing the genealogies (Matthew and Luke) were written first” (Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica, VI, 14)
4. A date before 70 A.D. is considered by many to be the most feasible

II. THEME AND OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL

A. ITS THEME OR PURPOSE...

1. Written to Jews, designed to prove that Jesus is the Messiah of OT prophecy
2. Evidenced by his frequent appeal to OT Messianic prophecies
 - a. He quotes from almost every book in the OT

- b. Twelve times he identifies O.T. prophecies as being fulfilled in the life of Jesus - **Mt 1:22; 2:15,23; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14,35; 21:4; 27:9)**
- Thus one could say that the theme is: “Jesus, King of the Jews”

B. A DETAILED OUTLINE...

(adapted from The Wycliffe Bible Commentary)

1. **The birth and childhood of Jesus Christ - 1:1-2:23**
 - a. Genealogy of Christ - 1:1-17
 - b. Birth of Christ - 1:18-25
 - c. Visit of the Magi - 2:1-12
 - d. Flight into Egypt and massacre of the infants - 2:13-18
 - e. Residence at Nazareth - 2:19-23
2. **The preparation for the ministry of Jesus Christ - 3:1-4:11**
 - a. The forerunner of Christ - 3:1-12
 - b. Baptism of Christ - 3:12-17
 - c. Temptation of Christ - 4:1-11
3. **The ministry of Jesus Christ - 4:12-25:46**
 - a. **His ministry in Galilee - 4:12-18:35**
 - 1) Residence at Capernaum - 4:12-17
 - 2) Call of four disciples - 4:18-22
 - 3) General survey of the Galilean ministry - 4:23-25
 - 4) Sermon on the mount - 5:1-7:29
 - 5) Ten miracles and related events - 8:1-9:38
 - 6) Mission of the twelve - 10:1-42
 - 7) Christ's answer to John, and related discourse - 11:1-30
 - 8) Opposition from the Pharisees - 12:1-50
 - 9) A series of parables on the kingdom - 13:1-58
 - 10) Withdrawal of Jesus following John's beheading - 14:1-36
 - 11) Conflict with the Pharisees over tradition - 15:1-20
 - 12) Withdrawal to Phoenecia and healing of a Canaanitish woman's daughter - 15:21-28
 - 13) Return to the Sea of Galilee and performing if miracles - 15:29-38
 - 14) Renewed conflict with the Pharisees and Sadducees - 15:39-16:4
 - 15) Withdrawal to the region of Caesarea Philippi - 16:5-17:23
 - 16) Instruction of the twelve at Capernaum - 17:24-18:35
 - b. **His ministry in Perea - 19:1-20:16**
 - 1) Teaching on divorce - 19:1-12
 - 2) Blessing of the children - 19:13-15
 - 3) Interview with the rich young man - 19:16-30
 - 4) Parable of the laborers in the vineyard - 20:1-16
 - c. **His ministry in Judea - 20:17-34**
 - 1) Another prediction of Christ's death and resurrection - 20:17-19
 - 2) Ambitious request of Zebedee's sons - 20:20-28
 - 3) Healing of two blind men - 20:29-34
 - d. **His ministry in Jerusalem - 21:1-25:46**
 - 1) Triumphal entry - 21:1-11
 - 2) Cleansing the Temple - 21:12-17
 - 3) Cursing of the barren fig tree - 21:18-22
 - 4) Questioning of Jesus' authority, and his parabolic answer - 21:23-22:14

- 5) Questioning of Jesus by various groups - 22:15-46
 - 6) Jesus' public denunciation of the Pharisees - 23:1-39
 - 7) Olivet Discourse - 24:1-25:46
- 4. The suffering of Jesus Christ - 26:1-27:66**
- a. Plot against Jesus 26:1-16
 - b. The final meal - 26:17-30
 - c. Prediction of Peter's denial - 26:31-35
 - d. Events in Gethsemane - 26:36-56
 - e. Events at the Jewish trials - 26:57-27:2
 - f. Remorse of Judas - 27:3-10
 - g. Events at the Roman trials - 27:11-31.
 - h. The Crucifixion - 27:32-56
 - i. Burial - 27:32-56
- 5. The resurrection of Jesus Christ - 28:1-20**
- a. Discovery of the empty tomb - 28:1-8
 - b. Appearance of Jesus Christ - 28:9,10
 - c. Report of the soldiers - 28:11-15
 - d. The great commission - 28:16-20

III. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPEL

A. A JEWISH GOSPEL...

1. We've noted its frequent appeal to OT prophecies
 2. It's organization is mostly topical, as opposed to strictly chronological (a common style in Jewish literature)
- **It appears to have been written with a Jewish audience in mind**

B. AN ECCLESIASTICAL GOSPEL...

1. It is the only gospel which mentions the word "church"
 - a. It foretells its beginning - **Mt 16:18**
 - b. It describes some of the life in the church - **Mt 18:15-17**
 2. It contains lengthy discourses especially beneficial to those in the church
 - a. Such as the sermon on the mount - **Mt 5-7**
 - b. Such as the many parables - **Mt 13**
 - c. Such as the Olivet discourse - **Mt 24-25**
 3. It contains admonitions important to disciples of Christ
 - a. Such as the importance of doing the Father's will - **Mt 7:21-23**
 - b. Such as observing all that Jesus commanded - **Mt 28:20**
- **In other words, this was a gospel designed for use by those in the early church**

C. AN EVANGELISTIC GOSPEL...

1. It is a preaching gospel
 - a. Especially when compared with the apostles' preaching found in Acts
 - b. For it expands upon the basic elements and point made in their sermons
2. Consider these themes in apostolic preaching:
 - a. God's promises in the OT have been fulfilled - **Ac 3:18,24**
 - b. The long-awaited Messiah, born of David's line, has come - **Ac 13:23**
 - c. He is Jesus of Nazareth - **Ac 13:23**
 - d. He went about preaching and doing good through mighty works - **Ac 10:38**

- e. He was crucified according to the promise and will of God - **Ac 2:22,23**
- f. He was raised from the dead, and exalted at God's right hand - **Ac 2:24,32-33**
- h. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead - **Ac 3:20-21; 17:30-31**
- i. Therefore, all should heed His message, repent, and be baptized - **Ac 2:36-38**
- **All of these points are expanded in the gospel of Matthew**

CONCLUSION

1. The purpose which Matthew's gospel served in the first century was simple...
 - a. To confirm faith in Jesus as God's Anointed One (the Messiah)
 - b. To instructing disciples on living the Christian life
2. It can serve a similar purpose for us today...
 - a. Increase our faith in Jesus as the Christ
 - b. Instruct us in the righteousness expected of those in His kingdom

The last three verses present the climax of this amazing gospel:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Mt 28:18-20)

Have you submitted to the authority and command of Jesus as it pertains to becoming His disciple and observing what He taught? If so, then you have the precious promise of His abiding presence in your life!

The Genealogy Of Jesus Christ

Matthew 1:1-17

INTRODUCTION

1. We begin our study by reading the first seventeen verses of the Matthew (**Mt 1:1-17**)
2. In **2 Ti 3:16-17**, we are told that **all** scripture is profitable
 - a. This includes such sections as the one we have just read
 - b. Though some may consider it a dry, laborious genealogical table of names...
 - 1) It is profitable for doctrine
 - 2) It is profitable for instruction in righteousness
3. My objective will be to share some spiritual thoughts that can be gleaned from this scripture

[Since Matthew is the only one of the four gospel writers to begin his gospel with a genealogical record of Jesus, let me first suggest a reason why...]

I. WHY MATTHEW BEGINS WITH THIS GENEALOGY

A. IT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF HIS GOSPEL...

1. It has been observed that:
 - a. Matthew wrote for the Jews
 - b. Mark wrote for the Romans
 - c. Luke wrote for the Greeks
 - d. John wrote for the church
2. Matthew's gospel was designed to convince Jews that Jesus is the Messiah
 - a. Fulfillment of Jewish prophecy is a recurring theme - e.g., **Mt 1:22-23; 2:4-6,14-15, 17-18,23**
 - b. Genealogy was certainly important to the nation of Israel - **Gen 5, 10, 1 Chr 1-9**

B. TO SHOW THAT JESUS FULFILLS TWO MESSIANIC PREREQUISITES...

1. The Messiah had to be a descendant of Abraham - cf. **Gen 22:18**
2. The Messiah had to be a descendant of David - cf. **Isa 11:1-2, 10**
-- **Mt 1:1** proclaims this to be true of Jesus, and **Mt 1:2-17** demonstrates it

[Whatever else Jesus may have done, if He was not a descendant of Abraham and David, He could not be the Messiah. So a gospel directed especially to the Jews would naturally settle this issue before proceeding. Now let's note some...]

II. SIGNIFICANT FEATURES OF THIS GENEALOGY

A. THE WAY IT IS DIVIDED...

1. Into three sections of fourteen names each - **Mt 1:17**
 - a. Abraham to David
 - b. David to the Babylonian captivity
 - c. Babylonian captivity to Jesus

- This may have been to facilitate committing to memory
- 2. Which may explain why some names were omitted
 - a. Between Joram and Uzziah there were three kings (Ahaziah, Joash, & Amaziah)
 - cf. **Mt 1:8**
 - b. But such omission was not unusual in Jewish genealogies; minor figures were often deleted
 - The main purpose was to establish essential connections, not minor details

B. JESUS' "LEGAL" RIGHT TO DAVID'S THRONE IS ESTABLISHED...

1. Not His "fleshly" right, for Matthew describes Jesus as the adopted son of Joseph
2. Luke records the "fleshly" ancestry of Jesus in **Lk 3:23-38**
 - a. A record of His ancestry from His mother's side
 - b. Where He is shown to have descended from David through Nathan, not Solomon
 - A careful study of **Lk 3** confirms this
3. This helps to answer a puzzling dilemma found in the OT
 - a. God promised that the Messiah would come from the loins of David
 - b. But a descendant through Solomon, Jeconiah (**Mt 1:11**), was so wicked that God promised none of his descendants would rule on the throne of David - **Jer 22:24-30**
 - c. How then would God fulfill His promise to David?
 - 1) By a descendant from a son other than Solomon
 - 2) Which Jesus was, having descended in the flesh from Nathan
4. So Jesus is both "legal" and "fleshly" heir to the throne of David...
 - a. "Legal" heir by virtue of His adoption by Joseph, descendant of Solomon
 - b. "Fleshly" heir by virtue of His birth by Mary, descendant of Nathan

C. THE INSERTION OF FOUR MOTHER'S NAMES...

1. They are unique, not only to be included in such a list, but in that:
 - a. Three were tainted in regards to moral purity
 - 1) Tamar played a harlot
 - 2) Rahab was a harlot
 - 3) Bathsheba was an adulteress
 - b. Ruth, though morally sweet and noble, mingled the royal blood line with Gentile blood!
2. Why mention these four women? Perhaps to suggest...
 - a. The relation of Christ to the stained and sinful?
 - b. Jesus would be a King to show mercy and pity to harlots, and open His kingdom to include Gentiles?

[Whether this was Matthew's intention here, he later does illustrate that Christ extended mercy to the morally repugnant and would enlarge His kingdom to include all nations. Finally, let's consider...]

III. LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS GENEALOGY

A. GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS WORD...

1. He made promises...
 - a. To Abraham
 - b. To David
 - c. Through Isaiah

...and the coming of Jesus, son of David, son of Abraham, fulfilled that promise!
2. We can therefore have confidence that God will keep His word!

- a. E.g., the promise of His Son's final coming - cf. **Ac 1:9**
- b. There is no need to lose heart!
 - 1) The duration between this promise and its fulfillment has barely reached the time between the promise made to Abraham and its fulfillment!
 - 2) I.e., 2000 years passed, but God still kept His promise to Abraham
 - 3) Likewise He will keep His promise to us!

B. GODLINESS IS NOT INHERITED...

- 1. Many godly fathers have had ungodly sons!
 - a. Solomon had Rehoboam
 - b. Hezekiah had Manasseh
 - c. Josiah had Jeconiah
- 2. As it has been said, **"God has no grandchildren"**
 - a. Being a child of God does not insure that your children will be God's children!
 - b. As parents, let us...
 - 1) Be diligent to raise our children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord"
 - 2) Not lose heart when our children stray (even Manasseh eventually repented)

C. THE GREATNESS OF OUR LORD'S MERCY AND COMPASSION...

- 1. Jesus humbled Himself when He came to this earth in the likeness of men - cf. **Ph 2:5-8**
- 2. He did this for our sakes!
 - a. To taste death for everyone - **He 2:9**
 - b. To help bring us to glory - **He 2:10**
 - c. To deliver us from the fear and power of death - **He 2:14-15**
 - d. To become our merciful and faithful High Priest - **He 2:16-18**

CONCLUSION

- 1. All this and much more, Jesus did by becoming what the first seventeen verses of Matthew's gospel proclaims: "...the Son of David, the Son of Abraham"
- 2. This genealogy of Jesus Christ...
 - a. Establishes the right of Jesus to be the Messiah
 - b. Reminds us of God's mercy
 - 1) In the lives of Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba
 - 2) In our own lives by fulfilling His promise to send Son to die for our sins

Have you received the mercy God offers through Jesus Christ, "...the Son of David, the Son of Abraham"?

Jesus And Immanuel

Matthew 1:18-25

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Mt 1:18-25**, we have Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus...
 - a. Matthew tells the story with a focus on Joseph
 - b. Whereas Luke centers on Mary
2. Noble qualities of Joseph are certainly seen in this passage...
 - a. His tender consideration for Mary
 - b. His willingness to bear ridicule
 - Little else is known of him, for it is his adopted son who is the primary interest in Matthew's gospel
3. The word "gospel" means "good news", and hints of just how good that news is occurs in this passage...
 - a. Especially when one contemplates the names by which the son of Mary was to be called
 - b. Such names as **Jesus** and **Immanuel**
4. In this lesson, we shall consider more closely these two names...
 - a. One which describes **His office** (what was He to do?)
 - b. One which describes **His nature** (who was He?)

[First we note that in his dream, the angel of the Lord tells Joseph concerning the child to be born of Mary...]

I. "YOU SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS"

A. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THIS NAME...

1. A very common Jewish name, often given in memory of Joshua (the Hebrew form of the name, Jesus)
2. It is interesting to compare these two figures of history
 - a. Joshua led the nation of Israel into the promised land (Canaan)
 - b. Jesus leads the people of God into the Promised Land (Heaven)

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS NAME...

1. Jesus (Joshua) means "God is Savior"
2. The son of Mary was rightfully called that, because "He will save His people from their sins"
- **Mt 1:21**
3. This Jesus would do by saving them...
 - a. From the **guilt** of sin
 - 1) By offering His blood as the atonement for their sins - cf. **Ro 5:8-9a**
 - 2) When one is washed by the blood of Jesus, He truly is their Savior
 - b. From the **power** of sin
 - 1) By sending His sanctifying Spirit to help His people break sin's dominion
 - 2) Paul writes of this in **Ro 8:1-2,12-14**

- c. From the **consequence** of sin
 - 1) I.e., the wrath of God to come
 - 2) Cf. **Ro 5:9; 1 Th 1:9-10**
- d. Ultimately, from the **presence** of sin
 - 1) I.e., when we depart to “be with the Lord”
 - 2) Cf. **Re 7:13-17**
- 4. And so the name of **Jesus** should be...
 - a. A very encouraging name to heavy-laden sinners
 - 1) Souls which desire salvation may draw near to the Father with confidence through Christ
 - 2) For it is **His office** (function, work) to show mercy - **Jn 3:17**
 - b. A very sweet and precious name to believers
 - 1) For He continues to intercede in our behalf, to save us from our sins
 - 2) Cf. **He 4:14-16; 7:24-25**

[As stated in a popular hymn, “There is a Name I love to hear...” and that name is **Jesus!** It may have been common in the days of Jesus, but should be very special now to all those seek to be saved from their sins! As Matthew recounts what the angel told Mary, he adds that the birth of Jesus also fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah in which it is said...]

II. “THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL”

A. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THIS NAME...

1. Isaiah’s prophecy concerning this name is found in **Isa 7:14**
2. In which a virgin would give birth to a child who would be called “Immanuel”

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS NAME...

1. Immanuel literally means “God is with us” - cf. **Mt 1:23**
2. This name describes the Messiah’s **nature**; i.e., that He is Deity!
 - a.. Other passages expound upon this aspect of Christ’s nature
 - 1) He is “Mighty God, Everlasting Father” - **Isa 9:6**
 - 2) He is “God”, possessing the “glory of God”; the Great “I AM”, who shared in the glory of the Father prior to His incarnation - cf. **Jn 1:1-3,14; 8:56-59; 17:5** (cf. **Isa 42:8**)
 - 3) Declared to be “the Son of God with power” by virtue of His resurrection - **Ro 1:3-4**
 - 4) He was “equal with God” who willingly humbled Himself - cf. **Ph 2:5-11**
 - 5) In Him “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” - **Co 2:9**
 - b. Human minds, finite and feeble, wrestle with this great mystery, but Jesus was “God manifested in the flesh”! - **1 Ti 3:16**

CONCLUSION

1. Would you have a strong foundation for your faith and hope...?
 - a. Then keep in constant view your Savior’s name “**Immanuel**” (“God with us”)
 - b. For having become flesh, God understands our human plight - cf. **He 2:17-18**
2. Would you have sweet comfort in suffering and trial...?
 - a. Then keep in constant view your Savior’s name “**Jesus**” (“God is Savior”)

b. For in sending His Son to die, God has offered a propitiation for our sins - **1 Jn 4:9-10**

So they called the Child born of a virgin and raised by a carpenter. By His resurrection from the dead, He proved true to His name. Are you willing to obey Jesus as One who was **“God with us”**, and through whom **“God is Savior”**? - **Mt 7:21-23; 28:19-20**

The Visit Of The Wise Men

Matthew 2:1-12

INTRODUCTION

1. Common to many nativity scenes commemorating the birth of Jesus is the presence of “three wise men”...
 - a. Implied is that these men, three in number, visited Jesus while still in the manger
 - b. Is this what the Bible really teaches?
2. Matthew is the gospel writer who records this visit...
 - a. Which is found in **Mt 2:1-12**
 - b. Which serves as the text for our study today

[This story of “**The Visit Of The Wise Men**” is both interesting and of practical value. Having read the text, let’s first note some...]

I. INTERESTING FEATURES OF THIS STORY

A. FOR WHAT MATTHEW DOESN’T TELL US...

1. Who exactly were these “wise men from the East”?
 - a. Some think they were a group of priests from Persia
 - b. Others believe they were astrologers from Babylon
2. How many were there?
 - a. No actual number is given
 - b. Three types of gift are mentioned (**Mt 2:11**), but quality of gifts does not necessarily imply the quantity of givers!
3. What was the nature of the “star”?
 - a. Was it an actual “star”?
 - b. Was it the planet Jupiter, often associated with the birth of kings
 - c. Was it a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the Sign of the Fish?
 - d. Was it a comet acting erratically?
4. How did these wise men connect the star with the birth of the king of the Jews?
 - a. Had they been taught by Jews of the Dispersion to expect the Messiah?
 - b. Had they been given special revelation from God not recorded in the Scriptures?

B. FOR WHAT LEGENDS HAVE RISEN...

1. That these wise men were “three kings from the Orient”
2. That their names were Melchior, Balthasar, and Caspar
3. That they visited Baby Jesus together with the shepherds the night of His birth
 - a. But it was some time later (up to two years!) - cf. **Mt 2:1,16**
 - b. They visited Mary and the child in a house, not a stable! - **Mt 2:11**
4. That they were later baptized by Thomas

[The facts are the Biblical record says little about **who** these men were. Perhaps because the emphasis is upon **what** they did: “We have come to worship Him.” (**Mt 2:2,11**) What is important is that Jesus is

worthy of worship, which can only mean that He is truly **deity** (cf. “Immanuel”, “God with us”). But there are other lessons that can be gleaned from “**The Visit Of The Wise Men**”...]

II. LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

A. IT IS EASY FOR FICTION TO BE TAKEN AS FACT...

1. We have seen what people have done with the story of Jesus’ birth
 - a. Making the number of the wise men to be three
 - b. Having them visit Jesus in the stable
2. There are other examples
 - a. Making the “forbidden fruit” in the Garden to be an “apple”
 - b. Depicting baptism in the Bible as pouring or sprinkling
- We need to be like the Bereans (**Ac 17:11**), and make sure we get the facts straight!

B. THERE MAY BE TRUE SERVANTS OF GOD IN PLACES WHERE WE MIGHT NOT EXPECT TO FIND THEM...

1. The Lord may have many “hidden ones” (i.e., hidden to our knowledge) like the wise men
2. Their history on earth may be as little known as that of Melchizedek, Job, Jethro
3. We must not assume that God’s people consists only of those we know about, listed in “our” directories
 - a. There can be many faithful Christians in other countries
 - b. We may not know about them, but God does! - **2 Tim 2:19**
- Though unknown to us, we can still pray for them!

C. IT IS NOT ALWAYS THOSE WHO HAVE THE MOST RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGES, WHO GIVE CHRIST THE MOST HONOR...

1. One would think the chief priests and scribes would have been the first to go to Bethlehem, hearing rumors that the Savior was born
 - a. But no, it was a few unknown strangers from a distant land
 - b. As John wrote in his gospel, “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” - **Jn 1:11**
2. Sadly, the same is often true today
 - a. Those in the Lord’s church often show less love and adoration than those in the denominations of men
 - b. Children of Christian parents often show less interest than many children of non-Christians

D. THERE MAY BE KNOWLEDGE IN THE HEAD, WHILE THERE IS NO GRACE IN THE HEART...

1. The chief priests and scribes were quick to provide Herod the answer to his question
 - a. But as far as we know, they did not act on such knowledge
 - b. They did not go to Bethlehem, and some never did come to believe in Him
2. What about us today?
 - a. We may knowledge in the head (we know the truth), but do we have grace in our hearts (do we act on it)?
 - b. We need to always grow in grace and knowledge - **2 Pe 3:18**

E. THE WISE MEN ARE A SPLENDID EXAMPLE OF SPIRITUAL DILIGENCE...

1. Consider what it must have cost them to travel

- a. In money
- b. In time
- c. In dangers
2. What about our diligence? Are we willing to pay the price...
 - a. To find Christ?
 - b. To serve Him?
 - c. To worship Him?
- They traveled at great costs and risk to worship Jesus; many Christians won't even take the time to attend a gospel meeting or a second service on Sunday!

F. THE WISE MEN ARE A STRIKING EXAMPLE OF FAITH...

1. They believed in Christ...
 - a. When they had never seen Him prior to their journey
 - b. When the scribes and chief priests were unbelieving
 - c. When all they saw was a little child on a mother's knee!
 - 1) Without miracles to convince them (except the star)
 - 2) Without much teaching to persuade them
- Yet they "fell down and worshipped Him"
2. This is the kind of faith God delights to honor!
 - a. For God saw fit to record their example of faith for us
 - b. And every time this passage is read, their example of faith is honored!
- As Jesus said later, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." - **Jn 20:29**

CONCLUSION

1. May the faith and diligence of the wise men serve to inspire us to greater service to our Lord!
2. Though the world around us may remain careless and unbelieving, let's not be ashamed to believe in Jesus and confess Him
3. We have much more reason to believe Him and worship Him...
 - a. His miracles, His resurrection from the dead
 - b. His teachings, His death on the cross for our sins

Are we willing to make the effort to find, worship, and serve this great King? As stated on a popular bumper-sticker: **"Wise men still seek Him"**

Note: Some of the main points for this lesson were taken from **"Expository Thoughts On The Gospel"** by J. C. Ryle.

The Early Years Of Jesus

Matthew 2:13-23

INTRODUCTION

1. A remarkable feature concerning the gospel records is their brevity...
 - a. Especially related to the early life of Jesus, following His birth
 - b. Mark and John relate nothing about this period of Jesus' life
 - c. Only Matthew and Luke record something about the first thirty years
2. Other than the visit of the wise men, Matthew records only...
 - a. The flight to Egypt - **Mt 2:13-15**
 - b. The massacre by Herod - **Mt 2:16-18**
 - c. The return to Nazareth - **Mt 2:19-23**
3. Why did Matthew record only these three events? Are there any lessons to be gleaned from what we know of the early years of Jesus?

[In an effort to answer such questions, let's first examine the text of **Mt 2:13-23...**]

I. MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT OF THE EARLY YEARS OF JESUS

A. THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT...

1. Precipitated by the angel's warning - **Mt 2:13-14**
 - a. Joseph was told to take Mary and the Child to Egypt
 - b. For Herod was seeking to destroy Jesus
2. Remaining there until the death of Herod - **Mt 2:15**
 - a. The sojourn and eventual departure from Egypt fulfilled prophecy - **Hos 11:1**
 - b. For the **exodus of Israel** alluded to in Hosea was evidently a type or shadow of the Messiah's own call out of Egypt

B. THE MASSACRE OF THE INFANTS...

1. Herod's angry decree - **Mt 2:16**
 - a. Having been frustrated in his original plans - cf. **Mt 2:7-8,12**
 - b. Ordering the death of all male children, two and under, in Bethlehem and surrounding districts
2. Jeremiah's prophecy - **Mt 2:17-18**
 - a. This terrible calamity had been foreseen - **Jer 31:15**
 - b. For the **exile of Israel** alluded to in Jeremiah was likewise a type or shadow of the grief that would be experienced again in the region where Rachel was buried

C. THE RETURN TO NAZARETH...

1. Joseph was directed via dreams - **Mt 2:19-22**
 - a. First, return to Israel, for Herod was dead
 - b. Then, go to Galilee instead of Judea, for Herod's son Archelaus was reigning in Judea
2. Residing in Nazareth, another fulfillment of prophecy - **Mt 2:23**
 - a. The prophecy "He shall be called a Nazarene" was a conglomerate based on the words

- of several prophets (“which was spoken by the prophets”)
- b. There are at least two possibilities as to what is meant here...
 - 1) “It may be that this term of contempt (**Jn 1:46; 7:52**) is what is meant, and that several prophecies are to be combined like **Psa 22:6,8; 69:11,19; Isa 53:2-4.**”
- **Robertson’s Word Pictures**
 - 2) “**Verse 23** alludes to **Isa. 11:1**, which states that a ‘branch’ (netzer, Heb.) will grow out of the roots of Jesse (cf. **Jer 23:5**). Under this view, ‘branch’ and ‘Nazarene’ share the same root (nzt, Heb.), and ‘branch’ refers to the coming ruler of Davidic descent. Although they used a different word, other prophets also spoke of the Messiah in terms of the ‘branch’ (**Jer. 23:5; Zech 3:8; 6:12**), and Matthew could legitimately say that this prediction was ‘spoken by the prophets’ (vv. **6, 15**).”
- **Believer’s Study Bible**

[It should be apparent that Matthew selected those events in Jesus’ early life which were foretold by the prophets. This assisted him in his purpose to show his Jewish readers that Jesus was truly the Messiah for Whom they were looking! Now for a couple of...]

II. LESSONS TO BE GLEANED FROM JESUS’ EARLY YEARS

A. WORLDLY RULERS ARE OFTEN OPPOSED TO GOD’S RULE...

1. This is seen throughout Jesus’ life and the period following
 - a. Herod the Great, upset at His birth - **Mt 2:1-3,16**
 - b. Herod Antipas, who had John imprisoned and beheaded - **Mt 4:12;14:1-12**
 - c. The leaders of Israel
 - 1) Who plotted against Jesus - **Mt 26:3-4; 27:1-2**
 - 2) Who attempted to cover up His resurrection - **Mt 28:11-15**
 - 3) Who sought to prevent the apostles from telling their story - **Ac 4:1-3,18; 5:40; 24:1-5**
 2. We should not be surprised if the same should happen to us today
 - a. Jesus warned that such might happen - **Jn 15:18-20**
 - b. Satan will certainly do all that he can to stop us
 - 1) He was behind the efforts to persecute Christ and His church - **Re 12:3-5,17; 1 Pe 5:8-9**
 - 2) He made use of kings to war against the Lamb and His followers - **Re 17:12-14**
 - 3) And will do so again - cf. **Re 20:7-9**
- But as prophesied, all such efforts are for naught! - cf. **Psa 2:1-12**

B. HUMBLE BEGINNINGS CAN’T HINDER THE ADVANCE OF GOD’S WILL...

1. Jesus’ beginnings did not prevent Him from doing great things
 - a. Even though He lived in exile and relative obscurity at the beginning (in Egypt)
 - b. Even though He was raised in a town despised by others (Nazareth)
 2. The example of Jesus’ humility ought to inspire us
 - a. To accept the mind of Christ, especially in relation to our brethren - **Ph 2:5-8**
 - b. To accept whatever area of service we might have in life - cf. **Psa 84:10**
- For those who humble themselves will be exalted at the right time - cf. **1 Pe 5:5-7**

CONCLUSION

1. What we know of Jesus’ early years is very little

2. But it is sufficient to confirm that He was truly the Messiah...
 - a. Who would be “despised and rejected by men” - **Isa 53:3**
 - b. Against whom “the kings of the earth set themselves” - **Psa 2:2-3**

3. And it should be sufficient to remind His disciples...
 - a. That we can expect the same treatment - **2 Ti 3:12**
 - b. That we seek to emulate the same example of humility and willingness to suffer for the will of God - **1 Pe 2:21**

Are you willing to humbly serve and even suffer persecution for Jesus “the Nazarene”?

Preparing The Way Of The Lord

Matthew 3:1-12

INTRODUCTION

1. Prior to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, we read of the work of John the Baptist...
 - a. Who preached in the wilderness of Judea - **Mt 3:1**
 - b. Who at first appears to have had a very successful start - **Mt 3:5-6**
 - c. Whose ministry was later cut short by his imprisonment - **Mt 4:12**
2. Though John's work was short-lived, it was clearly important...
 - a. Each of the four gospels preface Jesus' ministry with that of John's
 - b. His ministry prepared people for what was to come

[If we seek to understand the message and ministry of Jesus Christ, we must start with the one who was sent to "prepare the way of the Lord". In this study we shall begin by observing what we can regarding...]

I. THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

A. HIS MESSAGE...

1. A call to repentance - **Mt 3:1-2**
 - a. Lit., "a changing of the mind"
 - b. Which change prompts one to turn from sin and turn to God
 - c. Prompted by sorrow for one's sins, manifested by a zealous desire to do what is right - cf. **2 Co 7:10-11**
2. A proclamation of the coming "kingdom of heaven" - **Mt 3:2**
 - a. The term "kingdom" in Jewish thought meant "rule, reign"
 - b. The phrase "of heaven" implies the source of such rule; other gospel writers use "of God" - cf. **Mk 1:14-15**
 - c. The rule or reign of God was about to be manifested in a special way; it was "at hand" (near)

B. HIS PURPOSE...

1. To fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah - **Mt 3:3**
 - a. Which was to "prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight" - **Isa 40:3**
 - b. I.e., to prepare people for the coming of the Messiah
 2. To fulfill the prophecy of Malachi - **Mt 3:4**
 - a. Concerning the sending of Elijah - cf. **Mal 4:5-6**
 - b. John came "in the spirit and power of Elijah", not that he actually was Elijah - cf. **Jn 1:19-23**; (cf. **Mt 3:4** with **2 Kin 1:8**)
- As the angel told Zacharias, his son John was to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" - **Lk 1:16-17**

C. HIS SUCCESS...

1. People from Jerusalem, all Judea, etc., went to him - **Mt 3:5**
2. They were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins - **Mt 3:6**

- a. For he preached a baptism of repentance - **Mk 1:4a**
- b. A baptism for the remission of sins - **Mk 1:4b**

D. HIS CHALLENGE...

1. When people came to be baptized, he expected to see fruits in keeping with true repentance - **Mt 3:7-8**
 - a. He expected compassion for the poor - **Lk 3:10-11**
 - b. He expected honest business dealings - **Lk 3:12-13**
 - c. He expected fair treatment, contentment with one's wages - **Lk 3:14**
2. He told them not to trust in their heritage or ancestry - **Mt 3:9**
 - a. It was not enough that they were Jews, descendants of Abraham
 - b. God could just as easily raise up children to Abraham out of stones
3. He warned them that the time of judgment was near - **Mt 3:10**
 - a. The "ax" (God's judgment) was at the root of the trees
 - b. That which did not bear good fruit would be cut off - cf. **Ro 11:11-23; Jn 15:1-6**

E. HIS PROMISE...

1. One mightier than he is coming - **Mt 3:11**
 - a. Yes, John did indeed baptize with water with repentance
 - b. But one (Jesus) was coming to baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire!
2. Whose work would be to separate the wheat from the chaff - **Mt 3:12**
 - a. Using a "winnowing fan" (the Holy Spirit? cf. **Jn 16:7-8,12-13**)
 - b. And burn up the chaff with "unquenchable fire" (the Judgment? cf. **Mt 13:30**)

[We can learn more of the ministry of John the Baptist by studying the other gospels, but what Matthew records is sufficient to make several observations about how he was "Preparing The Way Of The Lord"...]

II. OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE MINISTRY OF JOHN

A. JOHN PREPARED PEOPLE FOR JESUS' MESSAGE...

1. John preached a call to repent - **Mt 3:2,8**
 - a. Jesus did the same during His earthly ministry - **Mt 4:17; 9:13; 11:20; 12:41**
 - b. Jesus expected the call to repentance to be proclaimed in His name to all nations - **Lk 24:46-47**
 - c. And so His apostles proclaimed the need to repent - **Ac 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 20:20-21; 26:19-20**
 - Unless we heed to the call to repent, we have not begun to understand nor act upon what it means to truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ!
2. John proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, that it was near - **Mt 3:2**
 - a. This was the same message proclaimed by Jesus - **Mt 4:17**; cf. **Mk 1:14-15**
 - b. By His disciples, in the Limited Commission - **Mt 10:7**
 - c. The theme of the kingdom was an important part of the gospel following the Great Commission - **Ac 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23**
 - What came to be taught concerning the kingdom, we shall consider in another lesson; but it was "at hand" during Jesus' earthly ministry, and in existence following His ascension to heaven - cf. **Co 1:13; 1 Th 2:12; Re 1:9**

B. JOHN PREPARED THE PEOPLE FOR JESUS' WORK...

1. He spoke of Jesus as One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit - **Mt 3:11**
 - a. This did not rule out Jesus baptizing in water, or that His disciples would
 - 1) Indeed, Jesus did baptize in water, via His disciples - **Jn 4:1-2**
 - 2) He later commanded water baptism in the Great Commission, which His disciples carried out - **Mt 28:19-20; Ac 2:38; 8:35-38; 10:47-48**
 - b. But Jesus would also baptize with the Holy Spirit, as promised - cf. **Ac 1:4-5**
 - 1) Which occurred at Pentecost - cf. **Ac 2:1-21**
 - 2) The result of which affects all who are saved - cf. **Ti 3:5-7**

-- Yes, John “indeed” baptized with water (as would Jesus), but John prepared the people for a work Jesus would do that went far beyond what he was doing!
2. He spoke of Jesus as One who would separate the “wheat” from the “chaff” - **Mt 3:12**
 - a. Jesus’ work would divide the good from the bad - cf. **Mt 13:47-50**
 - b. His work would even cause division within one’s family - cf. **Mt 10:34-39**

-- From what John said, we can expect that the effect of Jesus’ work would sometimes cause division, not peace!
3. He spoke of Jesus as administering judgment - **Mt 3:12**
 - a. Jesus later depicted Himself as judge - **Mt 26:31-46**
 - b. He spoke of how His words would judge us in the last day - **Jn 12:48**

-- It is true that Jesus came the first time to save the world, but He is coming again, this time to judge the world! - **2 Th 1:7-10**

CONCLUSION

1. The ministry of John the Baptist was an important one...
 - a. To “prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight”
 - b. This he did by preaching the same themes, letting people know what to expect

-- Of course, there was more, as John was to actually identify the Messiah to Israel
2. But when Jesus began preaching, people were more likely to:
 - a. Repent of their sins
 - b. Answer the call to be baptized
 - c. Accept the good news concerning the kingdom

...for John had been preaching such themes in the wilderness of Judea!
3. In a sense, John’s message is still needed today...
 - a. There are some who turn the message of Jesus Christ into some sort of “easy-believism”
 - b. But John reminds us of the need to bear fruits in keeping with true repentance

As Jesus would say later, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” (**Lk 6:46**). Are you showing true acceptance of Jesus as Lord by doing the things He says?

The Baptism Of Jesus

Matthew 3:13-17

INTRODUCTION

1. The baptism of Jesus by John served a significant role in both of their ministries...
 - a. It came at the height of John's ministry, after which his began to decline
 - b. It served as the beginning of Jesus' ministry, which soon overtook the ministry of John
2. The baptism of Jesus naturally raises some questions...
 - a. Why was He baptized?
 - b. Does it suggest an explanation of the purpose for Christian baptism?

[In this study we shall endeavor to answer these questions, first by reviewing the historical record concerning Jesus' baptism...]

I. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

A. JESUS COMES TO JOHN...

1. From Galilee to the Jordan River - **Mt 3:13a**
 - a. Jesus had been living in Nazareth, a city of Galilee - **Mt 2:23**
 - b. John had been baptizing in the Jordan River, where there was much water - **Mt 3:5-6; Jn 3:23**
2. To be baptized by John - **Mt 3:13b**

B. JOHN SEEKS TO PREVENT JESUS...

1. John tried to prevent Jesus from being baptized - **Mt 3:14a**
2. He explains why: "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to Me?" - **Mt 3:14b**
 - a. There is a sense of shock in John's words
 - b. While John did not fully comprehend who Jesus was until later (cf. **Jn 1:29-33**), he evidently knew enough that he was perplexed

C. JESUS PERSUADES JOHN...

1. Jesus convinces John to permit His baptism - **Mt 3:15a**
2. As Jesus explains why: "It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."
3. And so Jesus is baptized by John - **Mt 3:15b**

D. THE SPIRIT AND THE FATHER ADD THEIR TESTIMONY...

1. The heavens open, and the Spirit of God descends like a dove (in bodily form, **Lk 3:22**) and lights upon Jesus - **Mt 3:16**
2. A voice from heaven proclaims:
 - a. "This is My beloved Son"
 - b. "In whom I am well pleased"

[Without question, the baptism of Jesus was a significant event! It naturally raises several questions which I will try to answer...]

II. QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

A. WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED...?

1. Clearly not for the same reason other people were being baptized by John
 - a. Theirs was a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins - cf. **Mk 1:4**
 - b. They were confessing their sins - cf. **Mk 1:5; Mt 3:6**
-- Jesus was without sin - **He 4:15**
2. Jesus said it was “to fulfill all righteousness” - **Mt 3:15**
 - a. It was God’s counsel that people be baptized of John - cf. **Lk 7:29-30**
 - b. Jesus was willing to set the right example by doing the Father’s will, something He delighted to do - cf. **Psa 40:7-8; Jn 4:34; 8:29**
3. It also served to introduce Him to John and Israel
 - a. John had been proclaiming that He was coming - **Mt 3:11**
 - b. John had been told that the Spirit coming upon Jesus would be a sign - **Jn 1:29-34**

B. DOES JESUS’ BAPTISM EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM...?

1. Many refer to Jesus’ baptism to explain the purpose of Christian baptism
 - a. That our baptism has nothing to do with the remission of sins
 - b. That our baptism is but a public profession of one’s faith
 - c. That our baptism is to publicly identify our relation to Christ, just as His baptism publicly introduced Him to Israel
2. However, there is no Biblical connection made between Jesus’ baptism and our own
 - a. Christian baptism is for the remission of sins - **Ac 2:38; 22:16**
 - b. Christian baptism is a union with Christ in His death - **Ro 6:3-7**
 - c. Christian baptism was often administered in relative privacy - **Ac 8:35-38; 16:25-34**
3. No Biblical writer suggests that we are baptized for the same reason Jesus was

C. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SPIRIT DESCENDING AND THE FATHER’S VOICE...?

1. They certainly bear testimony as to who Jesus is
 - a. As the Spirit would do later, via the works Jesus did - **Mt 12:28**
 - b. As the Father would do later, on another occasion - **Mt 17:5**
2. They also bear testimony to the nature of the Godhead
 - a. I.e., three distinct persons in One God
 - b. Though One in substance, there is a distinction to be made between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - cf. also **Mt 28:19**

CONCLUSION

1. With the baptism of Jesus...
 - a. He was formally introduced to John, and by him to Israel - cf. **Jn 1:29-34**
 - b. The Father and the Spirit audibly and visually confirmed Him as the Son
 - c. Jesus demonstrated His desire to “fulfill all righteousness”
2. The baptism of Jesus is certainly significant to Christians...
 - a. Not we were baptized for the same reason as He
 - b. But certainly in confirming that He was the Messiah
 - c. And displaying the attitude that should be true of all His disciples (“I have come to do my Father’s will...”)

Jesus did not “need” baptism because He was without sin, but was baptized any way because it was the Father’s will for man at that time; should we who are sinners dare hesitate to do the Father’s will regarding baptism today? - **Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Ac 2:38**

The Temptation Of Jesus

Matthew 4:1-11

INTRODUCTION

1. One of the blessings of having Jesus as our Savior is His ability to comfort and aid those who are tempted...
 - a. This is because He too was tempted - **He 2:18**
 - b. He is sympathetic, and can provide mercy and grace to help in time of need - **He 4:14-16**
2. One of His greatest periods of temptation was at the beginning of His public ministry...
 - a. Immediately following His baptism by John - **Mt 3:13-17**
 - b. Just prior to starting His preaching ministry - **Mt 4:12-17**
3. Studying “**The Temptation Of Jesus**” can be fruitful for several reasons...
 - a. It reminds us that Jesus can understand our own temptations
 - b. It reveals how we can be more successful in overcoming temptation

[With that in mind and using **Mt 4:1-11** as our basic text, let’s begin with...]

I. THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS REVIEWED

A. THE SETTING OF THE TEMPTATIONS...

1. Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness - **Mt 4:1**
 - a. The same Spirit who descended upon Him in bodily form as dove - **Mt 3:16; Lk 3:22**
 - b. It was likely the wilderness of Judea, a very desolate place
 2. To be tempted by the devil - **Mt 4:1**
 - a. It appears that this challenge was being initiated by the Spirit
 - b. For it was the Spirit who led Jesus to the wilderness for this purpose
 3. Where Jesus fasted and was tempted for forty days - **Mt 4:2**
 - a. His fasting is reminiscent of Moses and Elijah - cf. **Exo 34:28; 1 Kin 19:8**
 - b. Luke reveals that temptations occurred over the period of forty days - **Lk 4:2**
 - c. Mark mentions wild beasts - **Mk 1:13**
- Thus it was after forty days of temptation that we find Satan approaching Jesus for a “climax” involving three particular temptations

B. THE CLIMAX OF THE TEMPTATIONS...

1. The first temptation - **Mt 4:3-4**
 - a. Satan’s appeal to the lust of the flesh
 - 1) Having fasted for forty days, Jesus was naturally hungry
 - 2) Challenging Jesus’ identity, Satan appeals to His fleshly hunger: “command that these stones become bread”
 - b. Jesus responds with Scripture
 - 1) Quoting **Deu 8:3**, “Man shall not live by bread alone...”
 - 2) There is more to life than just fulfilling physical desires; man is dependent upon the Word of God to truly live!
2. The second temptation - **Mt 4:5-7**

- a. Satan appeals to the pride of life
 - 1) Again challenging Jesus' identity, Satan sets Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple, tells Him to "throw Yourself down"
 - 2) Quoting scriptures himself, using **Psa 91:11,12**
 - b. Jesus responds with Scripture
 - 1) Quoting **Deu 6:16**, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God"
 - 2) While the passage Satan quoted is true, it would be an abuse of it to purposely test God
2. The third temptation - **Mt 4:8-10**
- a. Satan appeals to the lust of the eyes
 - 1) Taking Jesus to high mountain and showing Him the kingdoms of the world
 - 2) Offering to give Jesus all the kingdoms if He will worship Satan
 - b. Jesus responds with Scripture
 - 1) Quoting **Deu 6:13**, "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve"
 - 2) Though offered a shortcut to receiving power over the nations, Jesus does not take the easy path - cf. **Re 2:26-27; 3:21**

C. AT THE END OF THE TEMPTATIONS...

1. Angels came and ministered to Jesus - **Mt 3:11**
 - a. Exactly what they did is not mentioned
 - b. Perhaps they provided bodily nourishment (Hendricksen)
2. This would not be the last time Satan would tempt Jesus - cf. **Lk 4:13; Mt 16:21-23**

[With forty days of overcoming temptation behind Him, especially the temptation of taking a short cut to His rule as the Messiah, Jesus was now prepared to begin His public ministry. What observations might one make regarding "The Temptation Of Jesus"? Here are a few...]

II. OBSERVATIONS FROM THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

A. WE HAVE THE SAME ADVERSARY...

1. Jesus was tempted by the devil, and so are we - **1 Pe 5:8-9**
2. The devil now directs his attention towards the disciples of Christ - **Re 12:17**
- We should not treat him lightly, for the conflict is real! - **Ep 6:12**

B. WE HAVE SIMILAR TEMPTATIONS...

1. The lust of the flesh - e.g., immorality, especially when young
2. The lust of the eyes - e.g., materialism, especially when middle-age
3. The pride of life - e.g., pride and arrogance, especially when elderly
- These we must overcome, if we wish to have the love of the Father - **1 Jn 2:15-16**

C. WE HAVE THE SAME TOOLS TO OVERCOME...

1. Jesus appealed to the Word of God, and so can we - cf. **Ep 6:17**
2. Jesus had faith in the plan of God (victory through suffering), we need a similar shield of faith - **Ep 6:16; cf. He 10:35-39**
3. Jesus undoubtedly prayed, He taught the use of prayer to overcome temptation **Mt 26:41**
- The Word of God, faith, and prayer...against these the devil has no chance!

D. WE HAVE SIMILAR BLESSINGS WHEN WE OVERCOME...

1. Jesus was administered to by angels, angels will carry us home - cf. **Lk 16:22**
2. Jesus received wonderful blessings when He ultimately overcame and ascended to heaven; He has promised similar blessings for us - cf. **Re 2:10,26-27; 3:21**

E. WE CAN LEARN SOME IMPORTANT LESSONS...

1. Material sustenance alone cannot truly satisfy, we need the spiritual sustenance from God's Word
2. While we are to trust in the Lord, we should not foolishly tempt Him
3. Scripture can easily be abused, as well as used - cf. **2 Pe 3:16**
4. The way to glory is not quick and easy, but long and hard - cf. **Ac 14:22; Ro 2:7**

CONCLUSION

1. But perhaps the greatest lesson to glean from **"The Temptation Of Jesus"** is that we have a Savior who in all things was made like us...
 - a. That He might be our merciful and faithful High Priest - **He 2:17**
 - b. That having suffered, being tempted, He can aid us who are tempted - **He 2:18**
 - c. That He might be sympathetic, providing mercy and grace to help in time of need - **He 4:15-16**
2. Are you burdened with temptations?
 - a. Look to Jesus as your example in learning how to overcome temptation in your life!
 - b. Look to Jesus as your High Priest when you need to approach God in prayer and receive mercy and grace for those times when you succumbed to temptation!

As in all things, look to Jesus, as the writer to Hebrews exhorts us...

"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."

- He 12:2-3

The Preaching Ministry Of Jesus

Matthew 4:12-17

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Mt 4:12-17**, we read of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee...
 - a. Which followed the imprisonment of John the Baptist - **Mt 4:12**
 - b. Which began at Capernaum, on the edge of the Sea of Galilee - **Mt 4:13**
 - c. Which fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah - **Mt 4:14-16; Isa 9:1,2**
2. His public ministry involved "preaching"...
 - a. "From that time Jesus began to preach..." - **Mt 4:17**
 - b. Compare also **Mt 4:23**, "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom..."
3. The word "preach" (Gr., **kerux**) means "to herald, to proclaim"...
 - a. But what was the message Jesus was proclaiming?
 - b. Is it a message that should be proclaimed today?

[In this study our focus will be on **Mt 4:17**, as we seek to understand the message proclaimed by Jesus during His public ministry. From this verse we learn first that...]

I. JESUS PREACHED REPENTANCE

A. HE CALLED UPON PEOPLE TO REPENT...

1. Just as John the Baptist did - **Mt 3:2**
2. As Jesus would say later: "For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." - **Mt 9:13**

B. WHAT DOES REPENT MEAN...?

1. Many people have misconceptions concerning repentance
 - a. E.g., that repentance is "sorrow"
 - 1) But repentance is an outcome of sorrow - cf. **2 Co 7:9-10**
 - 2) Sorrow leads to repentance; sorrow itself is not repentance!
 - b. E.g., that repentance is "a changed life"
 - 1) Thinking that repentance is a converted life
 - 2) But repentance and conversion are two separate things - cf. **Ac 3:19**
 - a) Peter says "Repent therefore and be converted"
 - b) If repentance means the same as conversion, then Peter was redundant
 2. **W. E. Vine** defines "repentance" as:
 - a. A "change of mind"
 - b. That which "involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God"
 3. Repentance is therefore "a change of mind" in which we decide to "turn from sin and turn to God"
 - a. Which is preceded by sorrow
 - b. And followed by a changed life
- Jesus was therefore calling upon people to change their minds regarding sin, because of

what He taught about the kingdom (more on that shortly)

C. DOES REPENTANCE NEED TO BE PROCLAIMED TODAY...?

1. Most certainly!
 - a. Repentance is to be preached in Jesus' name to all nations - **Lk 24:46-47**
 - b. God now calls men everywhere to repent - **Ac 17:30**
 - c. Thus Paul preached to both Jews and Gentiles that they should repent - **Ac 26:20**
 2. Wherever there is sin, the message of repentance needs to be proclaimed!
 - a. People need to be told to "change their minds" (repent)
 - b. They need to "turn to God, and do works befitting repentance" - cf. **Ac 26:20; Mt 3:8**
- Any gospel preaching that does not include a clarion call to repent is not the true gospel!

[In calling people to repent, Jesus proclaimed why they needed to change their minds and turn from sin to God: "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This leads to our next point...]

II. JESUS PREACHED THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

A. THIS WAS A MAJOR THEME OF HIS PREACHING...

1. Just as it was with John the Baptist - **Mt 3:2**
 2. It was the focus of His itinerant ministry - **Mt 4:23**
 - a. The theme of His Sermon on the Mount - **Mt 5:3,10,19-20; 6:33; 7:21**
 - b. The theme of many of His parables - e.g., **Mt 13:24,31,33,44,45,47**
 3. It was the theme of the Limited Commission - **Mt 10:7**
- During this time, the kingdom of heaven was "at hand" (drawing near)

B. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN...?

1. **It is the same thing as "the kingdom of God"**
 - a. Some try to make a distinction (e.g., Scofield Reference Bible)
 - b. But a quick comparison of the gospels indicate the terms refer to the same thing
 - 1) Cf. **Mt 4:17** with **Mk 1:14-15**
 - 2) Cf. **Mt 5:3** with **Lk 6:20**
 - 3) Cf. **Mt 13:31** with **Mk 4:30-31**
 - c. Matthew used the expression "kingdom of heaven" almost exclusively, while the other gospel writers used the phrase "kingdom of God"
 - d. It may be that since Matthew wrote his gospel to the Jews, he chose to use the phrase "kingdom of heaven"...
 - 1) Because of the Jews' reluctance to use the name of God (out of reverence)
 - 2) Because of the Jews' misconception of the coming kingdom
 - a) Many anticipated a physical kingdom
 - b) The expression "heaven" (literally, "heavens") would emphasize a spiritual kingdom
2. **The kingdom of heaven involves four interrelated concepts**
 - a. God's kingship, rule, or recognized sovereignty
 - 1) The term "kingdom" as used by the Jews often stressed the abstract idea of rule or dominion, not a geographical area surrounded by physical boundaries
 - 2) It is used this way by Jesus in **Mt 6:10** - "Your **kingdom** come; Your **Will** be done..." (note the connection between kingdom and will)

-- Thus, the "kingdom of heaven" would involve the rule of heaven in the hearts of men
 - b. This rule of heaven is spiritual in nature

- 1) It is not a physical kingdom - cf. **Jn 18:36**
- 2) But one that is spiritual - cf. **Ro 14:17**
- c. Its visible manifestation today is in the form of the Lord's church
 - 1) For the church is that community of souls in whose hearts God is recognized as Sovereign
 - 2) That the church constitutes the kingdom of God on earth, consider:
 - a) How the term "church" and "kingdom" were used interchangeably - **Mt 16:18**
 - b) Comments made to those who were in the church - **Co 1:13; 1 Th 2:12**
 - c) The description of those in the churches of Asia - **Re 1:4,6,9**
- d. It has a future element as well as a present one
 - 1) Its future aspect is spoken of by Jesus, Paul, Peter - **Mt 25:34; 1 Co 15:50; 2 Ti 4:18; 2 Pe 1:10-11**
 - 2) Peter described the coming of its future state in **2 Pe 3:10-13**
3. **Thus the kingdom of heaven today is both present and future**
 - a. In the present sense...
 - 1) It is found wherever the sovereignty of God is accepted in the hearts of men
 - 2) It is a spiritual kingdom, for God rules in the hearts of men
 - 3) Its outward manifestation today is the Lord's church
 - 4) This rule or kingdom of God was "inaugurated" on the Day of Pentecost (**Ac 2**)
 - b. In the future sense...
 - 1) The rule or kingdom of God will be "culminated" with the coming of the Lord
 - 2) It will involve that "news heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells", described by Peter and John - **2 Pe 3; Re 21-22**
 - 3) It will be experienced only by those in the church who are submitting to God's will today! - cf. **Mt 7:21-23; 2 Pe 3:13-14**

C. DOES THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN NEED TO BE PROCLAIMED TODAY...?

1. Most certainly!
 - a. Philip "preached the things concerning the kingdom of God" - **Ac 8:12**
 - b. The apostle Paul in his preaching and teaching:
 - 1) Spoke of the challenges in entering the kingdom in the future sense - **Ac 14:22**
 - 2) Reasoned and persuaded with people concerning the kingdom - **Ac 19:8**
 - 3) Had gone among the Ephesians, "preaching the kingdom of God" - **Ac 20:25**
 - 4) Solemnly testified of the kingdom of God to the Jews in Rome - **Ac 28:23**
 - c. In his epistles, Paul wrote of:
 - 1) The nature of the kingdom - **Ro 14:17**
 - 2) Those who will not inherit the kingdom - **1 Co 6:9-10; Ga 5:21; Ep 5:5**
 - 3) Jesus giving the kingdom to God when He returns - **1 Co 15:24-26**
 - 4) How flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom - **1 Co 15:50**
 - 5) How we are now in the kingdom - **Co 1:13**
 - 6) His companions as fellow workers for the kingdom - **Co 4:11**
 - 7) How we might be counted worthy of the kingdom - **2 Th 1:5**
 - 8) God calling us into His kingdom and glory - **2 Th 2:12**
 - 9) Jesus judging us at His appearing and His kingdom - **2 Ti 4:1**
 - 10) The Lord preserving him for His heavenly kingdom - **2 Ti 4:18**
 - d. Hebrews refers to our receiving a kingdom which can't be shaken - **He 12:28**
 - e. James described the faithful poor as "heirs of the kingdom" - **Ja 2:5**
 - f. Peter wrote of how we might have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord - **2 Pe 1:10-11**

- g. John described himself as a brother and companion in the kingdom of Jesus Christ - **Re 1:9**
- 2. There is a slight difference in our message, however...
 - a. John the Baptist, Jesus, His disciples in the Limited Commission...all proclaimed the kingdom “at hand” (drawing near)
 - 1) For the rule of God as foretold by the prophets was about to be manifested - cf. **Mk 1:14-15**
 - 2) During Jesus’ earthly ministry that kingdom (reign) was yet future
 - But that was the “good news” (gospel) of the kingdom then: it was near!
 - b. However, after the ascension of Christ, the preaching of the kingdom proclaimed it both present and future
 - 1) The rule of God is now being fully manifested in the person of Jesus Christ - cf. **Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pe 3:22**
 - 2) Those who “gladly received” the message can be added by the Lord Himself to His church or kingdom (i.e., the community of believers who submit to His authority) - cf. **Ac 2:36-41,47; Co 1:13; Re 1:9**
 - 3) Those who persevered to the end could inherit the heavenly and everlasting kingdom of our Lord - **Ac 14:22; 2 Pe 1:10-11**
 - This is the “good news” (gospel) of the kingdom now: it is both now and coming!

CONCLUSION

- 1. In “**The Preaching Ministry Of Jesus**”, two themes permeated His message...
 - a. The need to repent
 - b. For the kingdom of heaven was at hand
- 2. As we fulfill the Great Commission today (**Mt 28:18-20**), our themes should be similar...
 - a. The kingdom of heaven has come and is coming (implied in “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”)
 - b. The need to repent (implied in “Make disciples of all the nations”)

If you desire to experience the bliss of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, you must do the Father’s Will (cf. **Mt 7:21-23**) and be in the kingdom of His dear Son today (cf. **Co 1:13**).

Have you submitted to the gospel of the kingdom as proclaimed by our Lord’s apostles?

The Discipling Ministry Of Jesus

Matthew 4:18-22

INTRODUCTION

1. We saw where the public ministry of Jesus involved **preaching**...
 - a. Proclaiming the need to repent, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand - **Mt 4:17**
 - b. Taking this message to synagogues throughout the land - cf. **Mt 4:23**
2. His ministry was not limited to preaching; it also involved **discipling**...
 - a. In which He called select individuals to follow Him
 - b. Creating His own group of **disciples**
 - 1) Just as John had his disciples - **Mt 9:14**
 - 2) Even the Pharisees had their disciples - **Mt 22:15-16**
3. We read of Jesus calling His first disciples in our text...
 - a. The call of Peter and Andrew - **Mt 4:18-20**
 - b. The call of James and John - **Mt 4:21-22**
4. Throughout His public ministry...
 - a. Jesus would call others to become His disciples - cf. **Mt 9:9**
 - b. Jesus would spend much time with His disciples
 - c. Jesus would end His time on earth with a command for them to make more disciples - **Mt 28:19-20**

[Such an important subject to our Lord naturally raises some questions. For example...]

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BECOME JESUS' DISCIPLE?

A. THE WORD "DISCIPLE"...

1. The word "disciple" literally means **a learner**
2. According to **Vine's** Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words, it denotes "one who follows another's teaching"
3. But a disciple was not only a learner, he was also **an adherent**
4. For this reason disciples were spoken of as **imitators** of their teachers
- When Jesus told Peter, Andrew, James, and John to "Follow Me" (**Mt 4:19**), it meant more than to just physically follow Him!

B. THE GOAL IN BECOMING HIS DISCIPLE...

1. Stated by Jesus on this occasion: "I will make you fishers of men"
 - a. Just as they had worked in going after fish, now they would be going after men!
 - b. As indicated in the Great Commission, they would be making disciples - **Mt 28:19**
2. Stated by Jesus on another occasion: **to be like their teacher**
 - a. Those perfectly trained will be like their teacher - **Lk 6:40**
 - b. Just as Christ sought to save men and make them disciples, so His disciples were to seek and save the lost

[A disciple of Jesus, then, is one who desires to imitate Jesus. Since He was concerned for the lost, His disciples would be also! Another question...]

II. HOW DOES ONE BECOME JESUS' DISCIPLE?

A. JESUS SAID "FOLLOW ME"...

1. This command He gave to His future disciples - **Mt 4:19; 9:9**
 - a. They would spend three years following Jesus around Palestine
 - b. During that time they would listen to what He said, observe what He did
 - c. Eventually they would be told to carry on His work - cf. **Mt 28:19-20**
 - d. Their success was related to this time spent with Jesus - cf. **Ac 4:13**
 2. To be a disciple of Jesus, then, requires that one:
 - a. Follow Him
 - b. Spend time with Him
 - c. Carry on His work
- But how can we do this when He is no longer with us on earth?

B. JESUS SAID "ABIDE IN MY WORD"...

1. This He said to those who believed in Him - **Jn 8:31**
 - a. By learning and observing what He taught, they would truly be His disciples
 - b. As Jesus would say later, future disciples would be made as they were taught "to observe all things that I have commanded you" - **Mt 28:20**
 - c. It would begin with baptism, for He had just commanded His disciples to make disciples by baptizing them - **Mt 28:19; cf. Mk 16:16; Ac 2:38**
 2. To be a disciple of Jesus, then, requires that one:
 - a. Be baptized (having repented and confessed one's faith in Jesus)
 - b. Follow Jesus by doing what He taught His first disciples (the apostles)
- By continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (i.e., their gospels and epistles), we can be Jesus' disciples today! - cf. **Ac 2:41-42**

[To follow Jesus by abiding in His word implies some degree of effort and cost. This leads to our next question...]

III. WHAT DOES IT COST TO BECOME JESUS' DISCIPLE?

A. HIS FIRST DISCIPLES LEFT "ALL" TO FOLLOW JESUS...

1. They left their business and family - **Mt 4:20-22**
2. As Peter would say later: "we have left all and followed You" - **Mt 19:27**

B. JESUS EXPECTED THE SAME OF OTHER DISCIPLES...

1. That He must come before family - **Mt 10:37; Lk 9:59-62; 14:25-26**
2. That one must be willing to suffer hardship - **Mt 10:38; Lk 9:57-58; 14:27**
3. Simply put, to forsake all to follow Him - **Lk 14:33**

C. JESUS EXPECTS THE SAME OF HIS DISCIPLES TODAY...

1. To seek first the kingdom of God - **Mt 6:33**
2. As illustrated in **The Parable Of The Great Supper**, family and business cannot come before accepting the call of the gospel! - **Lk 14:15-24**

CONCLUSION

1. In calling people to repent, Jesus was also calling people to become His disciples...
 - a. But like John the Baptist before Him, Jesus expected that people “bear fruits worthy of repentance” - cf. **Mt 3:8**
 - b. As He would say later, “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” - **Jn 15:8**

2. For those willing to accept His call, along with the cost, there is promise of great blessings...
 - a. As Jesus told Peter - cf. **Mk 10:28-30**
 - b. As Paul would encourage the Christians at Corinth - cf. **1 Co 15:58**

3. Have we accepted the call and responsibility of discipleship, or do we just “go to church”?
 - a. Which comes first, our families, our businesses, or Jesus Christ and His kingdom?
 - b. Are we busy building our lives, enjoying our retirement, while the Lord’s church suffers?
 - c. Do we spend more time on fishing and other forms of recreation, than we do on fishing for men?
-- How we answer such questions reveals much as to whether we are truly the disciples of Jesus!

May we all be open to the call of Jesus:

“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

The Itinerant Ministry Of Jesus

Matthew 4:23-25

INTRODUCTION

1. Jesus started His public ministry by moving to Capernaum - **Mt 4:12-17**
 - a. A city on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee
 - b. A fulfillment of the prophecy in **Isa 9:1-2**
 - c. From which He began to preach His message of the kingdom
2. But Jesus' work was not what you might call a "located ministry"...
 - a. He did not stay in one place
 - b. Where people might easily come to see and hear Him
3. His ministry was an "itinerant ministry"...
 - a. He traveled from place to place
 - b. If people wanted to hear Him more than once, they had to follow Him

[In our text, **Mt 4:23-25**, we find a summary of "**The Itinerant Ministry Of Jesus.**" In this study, let's begin by taking a look at...]

I. THE NATURE OF JESUS' ITINERANT MINISTRY

A. HE DID NOT STAY IN ONE PLACE LONG...

1. He "went about all Galilee" - **Mt 4:23**
2. He went about "teaching in their synagogues" - **Mt 4:23**
3. Luke records an example: in the synagogue at Nazareth - **Lk 4:14-30**
4. But as mentioned by both Mark and Luke, Jesus felt compelled to keep moving - **Mk 1:35-39; Lk 4:42-44**

B. HE PROCLAIMED THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM...

1. His preaching involved "good news" about the kingdom - **Mt 4:23; cf. Mk 1:14**
2. As recorded by Mark, this "good news" included the following:
 - a. "The time is fulfilled" - the time foretold by the prophets, cf. **Dan 2:44**
 - b. "The kingdom of God is at hand" - the kingdom foretold by the prophets, cf. **Dan 2:44; Lk 1:32-33**

C. HE HEALED ALL KINDS OF SICKNESS AND DISEASES...

1. He healed people afflicted with various diseases and torments - **Mt 4:23-24**
2. Including the demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics - **Mt 4:24**
3. Both Mark and Luke provide more detail at this point in their gospels
 - a. Casting out an unclean spirit - **Mk 1:21-28; Lk 4:31-37**
 - b. Healing Peter's mother-in-law - **Mk 1:29-30; Lk 4:38-39**
 - c. Healing many after a Sabbath sunset - **Mk 1:32-34; Lk 4:40-41**
 - Matthew records these events after The Sermon On The Mount in his gospel

D. HIS FAME SPREAD...

1. Throughout all Syria, the region to the north of Galilee - **Mt 4:24**
2. Also Decapolis, Judea, and beyond the Jordan, regions to the south and east - **Mt 4:25**
3. The healing of a leper forced him to stay in deserted places - **Mk 1:45**

E. GREAT MULTITUDES FOLLOWED HIM...

1. From Galilee and regions all around - **Mt 4:25**
2. Mark says they came to Him from every direction - **Mk 1:45**
3. They came to hear Him, and to be healed by Him - **Lk 5:15**

II. OBSERVATIONS REGARDING JESUS' ITINERANT MINISTRY

A. EVERYONE NEEDS TO HEAR THE GOSPEL...

1. Jesus' concern was not just for those in his town of Capernaum
 - a. Compelled to preach the gospel in other cities, He went about "all Galilee"
 - b. He later sent His disciples to preach throughout all the cities of Israel
 - c. He finally commissioned them to preach to "every creature", making disciples "of all the nations" - **Mk 16:16; Mt 28:19**
2. It has been said, "No one has the right to hear the gospel twice, before everyone has heard it once", reflecting a sentiment worth remembering
 - a. Once the gospel has been shared, we are not under obligation to repeat it again and again to one not interested
 - b. If those who hear are not interested, they have judged themselves unworthy of eternal life - e.g., **Ac 13:44-47**
 - c. As long as there are souls who have not heard, we do not always have the luxury of "spoon feeding" the spiritually indifferent in an attempt to reach them!
3. Similarly, churches may not always have the luxury to hold on to their evangelists
 - a. Some are like the people who tried to keep Jesus from leaving them - **Lk 4:42**
 - b. Having received the word, they should appreciate the need for others to hear - **Lk 4:43**
 - c. Especially today, when we have Bibles to teach us, we can more liberal with letting evangelists do their work of evangelizing! - cf. **Ro 10:14-15**

B. THE PURPOSE OF THE HEALING MIRACLES...

1. Certainly they were expression of Jesus' compassion - cf. **Mt 14:14; 20:29-34**
 2. Such miracles were also confirmation of prophecy - **Mt 8:16-17**
 - a. They were recorded that we might believe - **Jn 20:30-31**
 - b. They were intended to confirm who Jesus was - cf. **Jn 5:36**
 3. In a similar way, the miracles done by His followers was for the purpose of confirming their message as being from God - cf. **Mk 16:19-20; He 2:3-4**
 - a. Their purpose was not to make Christians "healthy and wealthy"
 - b. Their purpose was not for personal benefit; e.g., Paul did not heal Timothy of his stomach ailments and frequent infirmities, prescribing medicinal treatment instead
- The primary purpose of such miracles, as always, was to confirm God's messengers; in this case, confirming Jesus to be the Son of God! - cf. **Ac 2:22**

C. AUTHENTIC MIRACLES CAN'T BE KEPT SECRET...

1. Jesus' reputation quickly spread throughout the region
2. Even His enemies had to admit His miracles were real - **Jn 11:47**
3. Such was true with the miracles performed by the apostles - **Ac 4:14-16**
4. If one could truly heal today as Jesus and His apostles did...

- a. It would be on every TV network
 - b. None would deny it, especially Christians who question the validity of what is often claimed to be miraculous today!
- The more you study the miracles of the Bible, the easier it is to see that those who claim to do miracles today are either sincerely mistaken or deliberate deceivers!

D. FOLLOWING JESUS REQUIRES EFFORT ON OUR PART...

1. The multitudes who wanted to hear and see Jesus had to follow Him where He went
 - a. It required leaving their homes, probably at great expense
 - b. It was probably very inconvenient, especially when sick and disabled!
 2. Following Jesus today requires some effort also!
 - a. Time and energy must be expended to learn and grow in the teachings of Christ
 - b. It may not always be convenient to utilize opportunities to learn more about Jesus
- The next time you stay home because of some physical inconvenience, think of those souls who followed Jesus on His itinerant travels!

CONCLUSION

1. Many Christians have often thought how wonderful it must have been to see Jesus on earth during His public ministry...
 - a. To see the miracles, to witness the healings
 - b. To hear His sermons proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom
 - c. To sit at His feet, listening to His gracious words of instruction
2. In reality, it may not have been as easy as one might think...
 - a. You would have had to leave home for an extended period of time
 - b. Contending with the multitudes, it might have been difficult to even get close to Jesus

-- I wonder if many Christians today would have made the effort!
3. As we think of “**The Itinerant Ministry Of Jesus**”, I hope we will remember...
 - a. The importance of spreading the gospel of the kingdom today
 - b. The compassion our Lord had for the sick and oppressed
 - c. The effort we should be willing to make to follow the Lord
4. Perhaps most importantly, to realize that...
 - a. Once you have heard the gospel, no one is obligated to repeat it to you again and again
 - b. Having heard it once, you may never have the opportunity to hear it again!

It is **your** responsibility to heed the call to repent and accept the good news concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you?

Introduction To The Sermon On The Mount

Matthew 5:1-2

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Matthew 5-7**, we have recorded the most famous sermon that has ever been preached...
 - a. Commonly referred to as **The Sermon On The Mount**
 - b. It has touched more hearts, and in turn has sparked more sermons than any other
2. In **Mt 5:1-2**, the setting for the sermon is given...
 - a. He saw the multitudes that were following Him - **Mt 4:25**
 - b. He therefore ascended a mountain
 - 1) Many believe this refers to a natural amphitheater between the “Horns of Hattin”, on a slope that arises above Capernaum (Believers’ Study Bible)
 - 2) This may be the same occasion as **The Sermon On The Plain** - cf. **Lk 6:17-49**
 - c. When His disciples came to Him, He sat down and began to speak
 - 1) It was common to speak while sitting, rather than standing as we do today
 - 2) Cf. **Mt 13:1-2; Jn 8:2**
3. What is Jesus talking about in this sermon?
 - a. What is the main **theme**?
 - b. What is the **content** of this sermon?

[In this study we shall introduce **The Sermon On The Mount** by seeking to answer these two questions. To begin, let’s determine...]

I. THE THEME OF THE SERMON

A. NOTE THE SETTING LEADING UP TO THE SERMON...

1. In **Mt 3:1-3**, we read of the preaching of John the Baptist
 - a. Who was sent to prepare the way of the Lord
 - b. The theme of his preaching concerned “the kingdom of heaven”
 2. In **Mt 4**, we read of the beginning of Jesus’ ministry
 - a. After His temptation, Jesus preaches a message similar to John’s - **Mt 4:17**
 - b. His preaching in Galilee pertained to the “gospel of the kingdom” - **Mt 4:23**
- **Could Jesus’ theme be “the kingdom of heaven”?**

B. NOTE A PHRASE USED THROUGHOUT THE SERMON...

1. “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” - **Mt 5:3**
 2. “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” - **Mt 5:10**
 3. “...shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven” - **Mt 5:19**
 4. “...shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” - **Mt 5:19**
 5. “...will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” - **Mt 5:20**
 6. “Your kingdom come” - **Mt 6:10**
 7. “But seek first the kingdom of God” - **Mt 6:33**
 8. “. . . shall enter the kingdom of heaven” - **Mt 7:21**
- **Isn’t Jesus talking about “the kingdom of heaven”?**

[Both the setting and His repeated use a particular phrase should lead us to conclude that the **theme** of Jesus' sermon on the mount is: "**The Gospel Of The Kingdom Of Heaven**". With this in mind, let's briefly consider the **content** of the sermon as I offer the following outline...]

II. THE CONTENT OF THE SERMON

A. THE CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM...

1. Their character and blessedness - **Mt 5:3-12**
 - a. Qualities to be found in those who will be citizens of this kingdom
 - b. The blessings enjoyed by these citizens
2. Their relation to the world - **Mt 5:13-16**
 - a. They are the salt of the earth
 - b. They are the light of the world

B. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM...

1. In contrast to the "traditional interpretations and applications" of the Law - **Mt 5:17-48**
 - a. Jesus has not come to destroy or show disrespect to the Law
 - 1) It will not pass away until it is fulfilled
 - 2) Those who violate it teach contrary to it (while it exists) will be least in the kingdom
 - b. Jesus does require that the righteousness of those in the kingdom exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees
 - c. He illustrates by a series of contrasts concerning:
 - 1) Murder and anger
 - 2) Adultery
 - 3) Divorce
 - 4) The swearing of oaths
 - 5) The taking of revenge
 - 6) The treatment of enemies

-- In each case His teaching is consistent with the Law, but not the traditional interpretations and applications of the Law
2. With respect to man's relation to God - **Mt 6:1-33**
 - a. Charitable deeds
 - b. Prayer
 - c. Fasting
 - d. Materialism
 - e. Anxiety
3. With respect to man's relation to man - **Mt 7:1-12**
 - a. Judging others
 - b. Asking, seeking, knocking
 - c. The golden rule

C. THE EXHORTATION TO ENTER THE KINGDOM...

1. The **beginning** of the way - **Mt 7:13-14**
 - a. It will be narrow and difficult
 - b. Not many will find it
2. The **progress** along the way - **Mt 7:15-20**
 - a. Beware of false prophets who are wolves in sheep's clothing
 - b. You will know them by their fruits

3. The **end** of the way - **Mt 7:21-27**
 - a. In which “sayers” will be contrasted with “doers”
 - b. In which “hearers” will be contrasted with “doers”

CONCLUSION

1. In view of its content, we can appreciate why this sermon has been called...
 - a. **The Magna Carta of His Kingdom**
 - b. **The Manifesto of the King**
2. Our next study will begin a look at the sermon in closer detail...
 - a. With the first of two lessons on **The Beatitudes - Mt 5:3-12**
 - b. In which we examine the character and blessedness of those who are citizens of the kingdom of heaven

Have you responded to the exhortation to enter the kingdom? Remember the words of our Lord to Nicodemus...

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’

Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’

Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’”

(Jn 3:3-5)

The Beatitudes - I

Matthew 5:3-12

INTRODUCTION

1. As we begin to take a closer look at **The Sermon On The Mount**, we notice first that section referred to as **The Beatitudes - Mt 3:3-12**
 - a. The word “beatitude” means “supreme blessedness or happiness”
 - b. We find Jesus discussing the blessedness of those who possess certain qualities
2. It is as though Jesus was answering two questions people might have been asking...
 - a. Who will be the citizens of “the kingdom of heaven”?
 - b. What benefits do they receive?
3. My treatment of this passage will be somewhat different than normal...
 - a. Most examine each beatitude in detail before moving on to the next
 - b. But we will look at the entire section in an overall fashion twice
 - 1) Looking at it from two different perspectives
 - 2) Taking two lessons to do so
4. In this lesson, let’s consider **The Beatitudes** from the viewpoint of the question:

“Who will be the citizens of the kingdom?”

[In other words, what is the character required of the citizens of the kingdom?

I. THEIR CHARACTER INVOLVES INTERRELATED QUALITIES

A. THEY WILL POSSESS ALL OF THESE GRACES...

1. Only those who have all of the qualities described will truly be citizens of the kingdom
2. For it should be evident that some may be...
 - a. “Poor in spirit,” but do not “hunger and thirst after righteousness”
 - b. “Mournful,” but are not “pure in heart”
 - c. “Meek,” but are not “peacemakers”
 - d. “Persecuted,” but not “for righteousness’ sake”

B. THESE GRACES ARE INTERRELATED...

1. It takes all of these qualities, working in conjunction with one another
2. In this the passage is similar to **2 Pe 1:5-11**
 - a. Where various qualities are also listed
 - b. Where each are needed in conjunction to one another (“add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge...”)
3. Only then can one have “an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom”

[How the qualities are interrelated will become apparent as we examine **The Beatitudes**, noting that...]

II. THEIR CHARACTER INCLUDES EIGHT QUALITIES

A. THEY ARE “POOR IN SPIRIT”...

1. “To be poor in spirit is to have a humble opinion of ourselves; to be sensible that we are sinners, and have no righteousness of our own; to be willing to be saved only by the rich grace and mercy of God” (**Barnes**)
2. I.e., convicted of one’s own spiritual poverty
 - a. Exemplified by the tax collector in **Lk 18:13**
 - b. Such people God will accept into His good favor - **Isa 57:15; 66:1-2**
3. The opposite of “poor in spirit” would be “proud of heart,” such as:
 - a. The Pharisee in **Lk 18:9-14**
 - b. The Laodiceans in **Re 3:17-19**

B. THEY “MOURN”...

1. But do so in a specific sense: over one’s own spiritual poverty, one’s sinfulness
2. Like David did after his adultery with Bathsheba - **Psa 51:3-4**
3. Note the relationship between these first two characteristics
 - a. Unless one is first “poor in spirit”
 - b. They will not “mourn” over their spiritual poverty

C. THEY ARE “MEEK”...

1. This means gentle, easy to be entreated
 - a. They would rather suffer injury than inflict it
 - b. Not out of weakness, but out of humility, realizing one’s own poverty of spirit, one’s own sinfulness
2. A good example of meekness is Moses
 - a. He was certainly not a weak or timid man - **Exo 32:19-20; 30-34**
 - b. But when personally attacked, he was very humble - **Num 12:1-3**

D. THEY “HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS”...

1. They look for the righteousness which will meet:
 - a. Their spiritual poverty
 - b. Their mourning over the same
2. To “hunger and thirst” suggests not a halfhearted search, but one exemplified by:
 - a. David in **Psa 42:1-2; 19:12-14**
 - b. Paul in **Ph 3:7-15a**

E. THEY ARE “MERCIFUL”...

1. Loving towards those in misery (e.g., the “Good Samaritan”)
2. Possessing a forgiving spirit toward those who sin against them (**Hendricksen**)
 - a. As Jesus had toward those crucifying Him - **Lk 23:34**
 - b. As Stephen had toward those stoning him - **Ac 7:60**
3. Jesus stressed this characteristic on several occasions...
 - a. Later in this sermon, in teaching on prayer - **Mt 6:14-15**
 - b. In His parable of “The Unforgiving Servant” - **Mt 18:21-35**
4. This virtue grows “out of our personal experience of the mercy of God.” (**Lenski**)

F. THEY ARE “PURE IN HEART”...

1. Defined as “singleness of heart, the honesty which has no hidden motive, no selfish interest,

and is true and open in all things.” (**Lenski**)

2. Refers to one who is sincere, honest, without hypocrisy
3. That such a quality is necessary to see God, see **Ps 24:3-4**

G. THEY ARE “PEACEMAKERS”...

1. They devote their lives to making peace by following the Prince of Peace
 - a. Making effort to be at peace with all men - **Ro 12:18-21**
 - b. Helping others to be at peace with God by proclaiming the gospel of peace
- cf. **Ro 5:1; Ep 6:15**
2. “At peace with God and thus themselves filled with sweet peace, they live in peace, if possible, with all men and work to keep and to make peace where peace is threatened or lost. Theirs is the work of true Christians who follow in the footsteps of the Prince of Peace.” (**Lenski**)

H. THEY ARE “PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS’ SAKE”...

1. “The tense and voice of the verb (passive perfect) may be regarded as permissive:
 - a. “Who have allowed themselves to be persecuted, or have endured persecution”
 - b. “The idea is that they did not flee from it but willingly submitted to when it came to them.” (**Lenski**)
2. In what way, is explained in **verse 11**, and includes being:
 - a. Reviled or reproached
 - b. Persecuted
 - c. Slandered falsely
-- All for Jesus’ sake
3. That such persecution would often afflict those who are citizens of the kingdom, see **Ac 14:21-22; Ph 1:29-30; 2 Ti 3:12**

CONCLUSION

1. Such are the characteristics of those who will be citizens of the kingdom of heaven...
 - a. They are poor in spirit (realizing their sinfulness)
 - b. Thus they mourn (for their sins)
 - c. Thus they are meek (gentle toward God and others)
 - d. Thus they hunger and thirst for righteousness (which they desperately need)
 - e. Thus they are merciful (for they know they need mercy)
 - f. Thus they are pure in heart (seeking to please God with singleness of heart)
 - g. Thus they are peacemakers (making peace with others, having found peace with God)
 - h. Thus they are persecuted for the kingdom of heaven (misunderstood by the proud and arrogant who are still in their sins)
-- Eight graces, all interrelated and working together to produce the right kind of character
2. Such is the character of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven...
 - a. Involving eight graces, all interrelated
 - b. Working together to produce the right kind of character
3. Is the kingdom of heaven worth whatever effort might be involved in developing this kind of character...?
 - a. We shall see the answer to this question in our next study.
 - b. As we view **The Beatitudes** from the viewpoint of another question:

“What benefits do the citizens of the kingdom receive?”

But if you are poor in spirit, mourning for your sins, hungering for the righteousness that God provides only in Christ, what are you waiting for? As Ananias told Saul of Tarsus:

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Ac 22:16)

The Beatitudes - II

Matthew 5:3-12

INTRODUCTION

1. At the beginning of **The Sermon On The Mount**, we find that section of Scripture commonly referred to as **The Beatitudes - Mt 3:3-12**
 - a. The word **beatitude** means “supreme blessedness or happiness”
 - b. We find Jesus discussing the blessedness of those who possess certain qualities
2. As suggested in the previously lesson, it is as though Jesus was answering two questions people might have been asking...
 - a. Who will be the citizens of “the kingdom of heaven”?
 - b. What benefits do they receive?
3. In our previous study, we looked at **The Beatitudes** from the viewpoint of the question: “**Who will be the citizens of the kingdom?**”
 - a. We saw that their character would involve eight interrelated qualities
 - b. We saw that they would be poor in spirit, mourning for their sins, meek, hungering for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and willing to suffer persecution
4. In this study, we shall look at **The Beatitudes** from the viewpoint of the question: “**What benefits do they receive?**”
 - a. Is the kingdom of heaven worth the effort to develop such qualities of character?
 - b. Is the kingdom of heaven worth whatever persecution we might endure?

[I believe the answer is a resounding “Yes!” This becomes apparent as we take time to consider the blessedness of the citizens of the kingdom...]

I. THEIR BENEFITS SUMMARIZED IN ONE WORD

A. THAT WORD IS “BLESSED”...

1. It is the first word of the sermon
 - a. Just as it is the first word of the Psalms - **Psa 1:1**
 - b. Just as it is found in the beginning words of The Revelation - **Re 1:3**
2. It is used nine times in nine verses (which is why this section is called **The Beatitudes**)

B. THIS WORD INVOLVES GREAT JOY AND GLADNESS...

1. It can literally mean, “how very happy!” is the one described
2. We can also infer this from **Mt 5:12**
 - a. “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad...”
 - b. Or as found in Luke: “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy!” - **Lk 6:23**

[The benefit of being in the kingdom of heaven is the condition of blessedness, a state of true happiness! To understand why, let’s now look at...]

II. THEIR BENEFITS ARE BOTH PRESENT AND FUTURE

A. “THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN...”

1. As defined in a previous lesson (cf. **Mt 4:17**), those who receive the kingdom...
 - a. Are under the kingly rule of God
 - b. Are in a spiritual kingdom
 - 1) Which today involves being in the “church,” the **present** manifestation of the “kingdom of heaven” - **Mt 16:18; Co 1:13; Re 1:9**
 - 2) Which will involve the “new heavens and new earth” in the kingdom’s **future** and eternal manifestation - **Mt 25:34; 2 Pe 1:10,11; 3:13; Re 21-22**
2. Note that the first (**5:3**) and last (**5:10**) beatitudes include this expression...
 - a. Which I take to imply that the blessings in between also apply to those in the kingdom
 - b. Just as the kingdom is both present and future, we shall observe that the blessings described involve both present and future

B. “THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED...”

1. This is in reference to those who mourn over their sins and spiritual poverty
2. They are comforted even **now** - **2 Co 1:3-5**
3. They shall be comforted in the **future** - **Re 21:1-4**

C. “THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH...”

1. In one sense, they inherit it **now**
 - a. As a result of putting the kingdom of God first - **Mk 6:33; Mk 10:29-30**
 - b. Though they may have less than some who are wicked, God enables them to enjoy it more! - **Ecc 5:19-6:2**
 - c. This explanation seems to be consistent with the context of **Psa 37**, from which the phrase was taken - **Psa 37:1-11, 16-29**
2. But in another sense, there yet remains a promise concerning a “*new earth*” for those in the kingdom now - **2 Pe 3:10-13**

D. “THEY SHALL BE FILLED...”

1. That is, with the righteousness we so desperately need, found only in Christ - **Ph 3:8-9**
2. Received **presently**, through the precious blood of Christ - **Ro 5:9**
3. Received **in fullness** when adorned in the white linen of righteousness in preparation for the marriage of the Lamb - **Re 19:5-9**

E. “THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY...”

1. Those in the kingdom enjoy forgiveness of sins **now** through the blood of Jesus - **Re 1:5-6**
2. They shall also be shown mercy in the **future** by escaping the righteous wrath of God in the Day of Judgment - **Ro 5:9**

F. “THEY SHALL SEE GOD...”

1. **Presently**, citizens of the kingdom can see God through their Lord Jesus - **Jn 14:6-7**
2. But in the **future**, we shall see Him face to face - **Re 21:3; 22:3-4**

G. “THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD...”

1. Even **now** we are called the sons of God - **1 Jn 3:1-2**
2. How much more so, in the **future**! - **Re 21:5-7**

CONCLUSION

1. Perhaps we better understand why those in “the kingdom of heaven” are truly **blessed**, for while...
 - a. Poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven!
 - b. Mourning for their sins, they shall be comforted!
 - c. Meek in their relation to God and man, they shall inherit the earth!
 - d. Hungering and thirsting for righteousness, they shall be filled!
 - e. Merciful to others, they shall obtain mercy!
 - f. Pure in heart, they shall see God!
 - g. Makers of peace, they shall be called sons of God!
 - h. Persecuted for righteousness’ sake, theirs is the kingdom of heaven!

2. Certainly the benefits of the kingdom outweigh anything this world has to offer, or any persecution it might inflict...!
 - a. For there are blessings now “in this life”
 - b. And there are blessings “in the age to come” - **Mk 10:28-30**

2. But the **blessedness** of the citizens is only for those who have the **characteristics** of the citizens in ever-increasing measure...
 - a. Do we have the qualities described in **The Beatitudes**?
 - b. Do not the blessings described in **The Beatitudes** encourage us to develop such qualities?

May this sermon of Jesus motivate us to examine our attitudes, to see if there is not room for improvement in our relationships with both God and our fellow man!

The Influence Of The Kingdom

Matthew 5:13-16

INTRODUCTION

1. In **The Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12)**, we saw...
 - a. The character of those who would be citizens of the kingdom
 - b. The blessedness of the citizens described
2. In the final beatitude, Jesus implied the attitude the world would often display towards the citizens of the kingdom - **Mt 5:10-12**
 - a. The world would revile and persecute those in the kingdom
 - b. The world would say all kinds of evil against them falsely for His sake
 - c. The world would persecute them just as it persecuted the prophets before them
 - Thus the influence of the world upon the kingdom would often be one of persecution
3. Jesus then proceeded to describe the opposite...
 - a. The influence of the kingdom upon the world
 - b. The impact the kingdom was designed to have upon those in the world

[He uses two metaphors in doing so. The first, in **Mt 5:13**, involves the figure of salt...]

I. “YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH”

A. SALT HAS SEVERAL CHARACTERISTICS...

1. It is white, enhances flavor, preserves, etc.
2. Based on the context, it is probably salt’s ability to enhance flavor to which Jesus refers in his illustration
 - a. Notice: “...but if the salt loses its flavor...”
 - b. Salt has the ability to give flavor to that which is otherwise bland
 - c. Job mentioned this ability in **Job 6:6**

B. THROUGH THE METAPHOR OF SALT...

1. Jesus depicts the relationship of the citizens of the kingdom to the world as one of:
 - a. Making the world palatable (bearable) to God, and possibly to others as well
 - b. Perhaps making it possible for God to continue to bear with this world and its “distasteful” wickedness
2. The idea that the “righteous few” can make it is easier for God to forbear the many wicked is illustrated:
 - a. In Abraham’s conversation with God over Sodom - **Gen 18:20-32**
 - b. In God’s dealing with Jerusalem - **Jer 5:1**
- So from God’s point of view, the citizens of the kingdom give the world what good “flavor” it has!

C. JESUS WARNS AGAINST LOSING OUR FLAVORING ABILITY...!

1. With pure salt...
 - a. It actually never loses its flavor

- b. But when mixed with impurities salt can lose its ability to enhance flavor
- 2. We too might lose our ability to be a “flavoring agent” for the world...
 - a. By allowing “impurities” into our lives - **1 Co 15:33**
 - b. Therefore, we need to keep ourselves from sin - **Ep 5:3-7**

D. IF WE LOSE OUR FLAVOR...

- 1. How are we going to be “seasoned”? (impurities prevent us from being useful)
- 2. We will be thrown out!
 - a. Is Jesus teaching the possibility of losing our salvation?
 - b. He certainly does elsewhere! - **Mt 13:40-43; Re 3:15-16**

[First of all, then, we are told of the relationship of the kingdom to the world **from God’s point of view**: “You are the salt of the earth.” In **Mt 5:14-16**, we find Jesus teaching concerning those in the kingdom as to their **primary function** in the world...]

II. “YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD”

A. USED BY GOD TO TRANSMIT HIS GLORY TO THE WORLD...

- 1. They are “lights” in a dark world - **Ph 2:14-15**
- 2. Their purpose: to proclaim the praises of God! - **1 Pe 2:9; Ep 5:8b-9**

B. THEY ARE NOT A LIGHT IN AND OF THEMSELVES...

- 1. Only in the Lord - **Ep 5:8a**
- 2. Christ is the “true” or “original” light - **Jn 8:12**
- 3. Citizens of the kingdom are simply “luminaries” reflecting The One True Light, just as the moon reflects the sun - **2 Co 4:6**

C. CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM HAVE A TWOFOLD RESPONSIBILITY AS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD...

- 1. They must be **visible**
 - a. Implied by Jesus in His use of a “city” and a “lamp stand” as metaphors
 - b. Jesus therefore expects His followers to be **seen** by the world - e.g., **Jn 13:35; 17:21**
- 2. They must **radiate** (give light)
 - a. This principle conveyed by the idea of the lamp
 - 1) Designed to **shine** on a lamp stand
 - 2) Not put under a basket
 - b. This principle explicitly stated in “let your light so shine before men”
- The purpose of such **visible radiation**: so men may **glorify the Father** in heaven - e.g., **1 Pe 2:11-12; 2 Co 9:12-13**

CONCLUSION

- 1. The influence and impact that the citizens of the kingdom are to have on the world can be simply stated...
 - a. “You are the salt of the earth”
 - b. “You are the light of the world”
- 2. Why make the effort to be salt and light? Because of He who is described as “your Father who is in heaven”...!

- a. An expression which should remind us that God is both:
 - 1) **Tender** (He is our “Father”; a term of tenderness)
 - 2) **Majestic** (He is “in heaven”)
 - b. Such a Majestic Being, willing to be our Father, makes Him:
 - 1) **Worthy to be pleased!**
 - 2) **Worthy to be praised!**
3. We who claim to be the children of God, citizens of the kingdom, are we...
- a. **Pleasing to our Father** (by being “the salt of the earth”)?
 - b. **Praising Him** (by being “the light of the world”)?

If not, then may the prayer of David in **Psa 51:10-15** become our own:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.

Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. “

Jesus And The Law

Matthew 5:17-19

INTRODUCTION

1. Up to this point, Jesus has been describing the **citizens** of the kingdom...
 - a. Their character and blessedness - **Mt 5:3-12**
 - b. Their influence on the world - **Mt 5:13-16**
2. The next section details the **righteousness** of the kingdom...
 - a. The righteous conduct Jesus would expect of His disciples
 - b. Especially in contrast with the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees
3. He begins by correcting any false impression some may have had about **His relationship with the Law** of Moses and the Prophets...
 - a. Had He come to destroy the Law and the Prophets?
 - b. Are His teachings contradictory to the Law and the Prophets?

[In **Mt 5:17-19**, we find His answer to such questions. Our first observation is that...]

I. HE CAME NOT TO DESTROY, BUT TO FULFILL

A. SOME MAY HAVE THOUGHT JESUS INTENDED TO TOTALLY DISREGARD THE LAW...

1. That His coming and teaching would regard the Old Law in a negative light
2. For the expression “to destroy” means literally to “to destroy utterly, to overthrow completely” (**Vine**)

B. ON THE CONTRARY, HIS PURPOSE WAS TO FULFILL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS...

1. **For they foretold the coming of the Messiah (Christ)**
 - a. There are approximately 330 prophecies concerning the Christ found in the Law and the Prophets
 - b. For example, **Deu 18:15,18-19; Isa 53:1-12**
2. **For they foretold the coming of the kingdom of God**
 - a. One example is **Dan 2:44**
 - b. Jesus proclaimed the fulfillment of that prophecy was now at hand - **Mk 1:14-15**
3. **For they also foretold the establishment of a new and different covenant for the people**
 - a. See **Jer 31:31-34**
 - b. That Jesus brought in this new covenant is confirmed in **He 8:6-13**

C. THEREFORE, UNTIL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS WERE FULFILLED, JESUS TAUGHT THAT...

1. The Law would be as permanent as the heavens and the earth - **Mt 5:18**
 - a. As He said in **Lk 16:17**, “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.”
 - b. There would be no change at all, until it was fulfilled

- c. Not even a **jot** or a **tittle** (Hebrew grammatical markings, similar to the dotting of an “i” or the crossing of a “t”)
- 2. A person’s treatment of the Law (while still in force) would affect their standing in the kingdom - **Mt 5:19** How so...?
 - a. Remember that the kingdom has a **future** aspect - **Mt 7:21-23**
 - b. Those who lived before the coming of the kingdom in its **present** sense (the church) could still be in the kingdom in its **future** sense
 - 1) Note what is said about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob - **Mt 8:11**
 - 2) But then notice what was said about the “sons of the kingdom,” those Jews who by the Law had the right to inherit the kingdom but did not appreciate its fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ! - **Mt 8:12**
 - Thus, one’s standing in the kingdom (in its future sense) would be affected by their treatment of whatever Law of God was in effect when they were alive!

D. AN IMPORTANT QUESTION: “DID JESUS FULFILL THE LAW...?”

- 1. **If He did not...**
 - a. He failed His purpose in coming to this earth! - **Mt 5:17**
 - b. We had better observe the Law in its strictest sense! - **Mt 5:18-19** (including circumcision, and not eating unclean meats!)
- 2. **If He did...**
 - a. He accomplished His purpose! (notice **Jn 17:4**)
 - b. We should not be surprised to find a **new** Law or Covenant governing God’s people today
- 3. **Indeed, Jesus must have fulfilled the Old Law...**
 - a. For there has been changes:
 - 1) In the priesthood - **He 7:11-14**
 - 2) In the Law itself - **He 7:18-19,22**
 - b. As the Law itself foretold, it has been replaced by a New Law - **He 8:6-13**

[Though Jesus ultimately fulfilled the Law, at the time of this sermon they had not been fulfilled. So, true to His statement in **verse nineteen**, He taught His disciples to be faithful to God’s Law as it then stood. But what about the contrasts found in **Mt 5:21-48**? Are not these to be viewed as comparisons between the Old Law and the New Law? Here are some thoughts along these lines...]

II. THE CONTRAST MADE BY JESUS

A. MANY UNDERSTAND THAT JESUS WAS CONTRASTING THE OLD WITH THE NEW...

- 1. I.e., comparing the Law of Moses with the Law of Christ which would govern His kingdom
- 2. This in essence has Jesus teaching:
 - a. That the “Old Law” only condemned the **outward** actions
 - b. But that the “New Law” introduced by Jesus condemned the **inner** conditions which led to the outer actions

B. HOWEVER, I UNDERSTAND THE CONTRAST TO BE DIFFERENT...

- 1. A contrast between:
 - a. The “traditional interpretation and application” of the Law
 - b. The “righteousness of the kingdom” Jesus would require of His disciples
- 2. In fact, Jesus demonstrated that the righteousness of the kingdom...

- a. Was not only contrary to the manner many had interpreted and applied the Law
- b. But in harmony with the original spirit of the Law as given to Moses and Israel

C. REASONS FOR SUCH A VIEW...

1. The other view would seem strange in light of **verse 19**
 - a. Jesus had just warned against any alteration of the commandments of the Law!
 - b. The first view has Jesus doing the very thing He had just warned against!
2. If Jesus was referring to what Moses had commanded in the Law itself, it is more likely different wording would have been used
 - a. At other times, when Jesus was definitely referring to what the Law actually said, He prefaced it with things like:
 - 1) "Moses commanded" - **Mt 8:4**
 - 2) "It is written" - **Mt 4:4,7,10**
 - b. Instead, we find Jesus repeatedly using phrases more likely to refer to **oral** teachings and interpretations rather than the **written** Word of God:
 - 1) "You have heard that it was said to those of old" - **Mt 5:21,27**
 - 2) "Furthermore it has been said" - **Mt 5:31**
 - 3) "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old" - **Mt 5:33**
 - 4) "You have heard that it was said" - **Mt 5:38,43**
3. In two cases, Jesus refers to statements not even found in the Law of Moses!
 - a. "...and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment" - **Mt 5:21**
 - b. "...and hate your enemy" - **Mt 5:43**
 - Here, Jesus reacted, not to the Law itself, but to the way it was often used!
4. We should also remember that the "Law and the Prophets" were just as concerned with the **inner** thoughts of the heart as the Law of Christ is - cf. **Deu 6:4-7; Isa 29:13-14**

CONCLUSION

1. So Jesus came...
 - a. Not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill the Law
 - b. Which He did, by fulfilling its many prophecies
 - That Law has now been replaced by the New Covenant of our Lord
2. In illustrating the righteousness expected of those under the New Covenant, Jesus will...
 - a. Contrast it with the traditional interpretations and applications orally handed down
 - b. Demonstrate how our righteousness must indeed exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees!

In our next lesson, we shall begin looking at the righteousness Jesus demands...

The Righteousness Of The Scribes And Pharisees

Matthew 5:20

INTRODUCTION

1. As Jesus prepares to contrast the righteousness of the kingdom with the traditional interpretation and application of the Law, He does so with a strong warning to those who would enter the kingdom of heaven
2. Found in **Mt 5:20**, Jesus warned that...

“Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”

[To appreciate and apply what Jesus said, it might help if we first examined...]

I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

A. THEY WERE KNOWN TO “SAY AND DO NOT”... - Mt 23:1-4

1. Though they often taught the truth, they did not often practice what they preached!
2. From them many parents got the saying “Do as I say, not as I do”

B. THEY WERE KNOWN TO DO THINGS TO BE SEEN OF MEN... - Mt 23:5-7

1. They enjoyed wearing religious garments that separated them from others, and delighted in having places and titles of honor
2. Does this sound like any religious leaders today?

C. THEY WERE KNOWN TO NEGLECT PARTS OF GOD’S LAW... - Mt 23:23-24

1. In their case, they would emphasize the **lighter** matters of the law, while neglecting the **weightier** commands
2. Or as we would say today, they “majored in minors and minored in majors”

D. THEY WERE KNOWN TO BE LOVERS OF MONEY... - Lk 16:13-15

1. **Mammon** was their god, though they were quick to deny it and try to justify themselves before men
2. Does this sound like any **prosperity preachers** we see and hear today?

[Such was the level of “righteousness” the scribes and Pharisees as a group. Not all scribes and Pharisees were guilty of such things (e.g., Nicodemus, **Jn 3:1; 7:45-52; 19:38-42**). Why must our righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees? The righteousness of the kingdom demands more...!]

II. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM

A. WE LEARN IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT THAT...

1. We cannot “say and do not” - cf. **Mt 7:21**
2. We cannot “do things to be seen of men” - cf. **Mt 6:1**
3. We cannot “neglect” **any** commandments of God’s law - cf. **Mt 5:19**
4. We cannot be “lovers of money” - **Mt 6:24**

B. THIS SHOULD SERVE AS A WARNING TO ANY WHO THINK THEY CAN BE FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS, BUT DO NOT...

1. Combine their profession of faith with suitable deeds - cf. also **Ja 2:14-17; 1 Jn 2:4-6; 1 Jn 3:18**
2. Keep their personal, private lives consistent with their public appearance and profession - cf. **Mk 4:22**
3. Make diligent effort to observe **all** that Jesus commanded - cf. **Mt 28:20; Jn 8:31-32; 2 Jn 9**
4. Remain free from the enticement of materialism - cf. also **1 Ti 6:9-10; 1 Jn 2:15-17**

CONCLUSION

1. Without question, our righteousness as citizens of the kingdom must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees
2. But how can our righteousness be consistent with that demanded by our King? It is possible only by the **grace** of God...
 - a. Whereby His **mercy** provides forgiveness to those in Christ - **1 Jn 1:9**
 - b. Whereby His **strength** makes it possible to live according to the “righteousness of the kingdom of heaven”! - **Ph 4:13**

In our next study, we will begin to notice the various examples Jesus gave as to **how** our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees...

The Anger That Kills

Matthew 5:21-26

INTRODUCTION

1. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus challenges us to attain to a high level of righteousness...
 - a. To exceed “the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” - **Mt 5:20**
 - b. He illustrates what is meant through a series on contrasts
 - 1) Between what they had heard from those of old
 - 2) And what He was now declaring to them
2. The first contrast (**Mt 5:21-26**) pertains to properly understanding and applying...
 - a. The Sixth Commandment
 - b. I.e., “You shall not murder” - cf. **Exo 20:13**

[How should the sixth command be understood and applied? Is the actual act of murder the only thing we need to be concerned about? Before we consider what Jesus taught, let’s look at...]

I. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

A. NOTE THAT I SAY “TRADITIONAL”...

1. Jesus is responding to traditional interpretations of the Law, not the Law itself
 - a. I.e., what had been taught by the “traditions of the elders” - cf. **Mt 15:2**
 - b. Note His preparatory remarks: “You have HEARD that it was SAID...”
 - c. Referring to **oral traditions** rather than the **written Law** (cf. earlier lesson on “**Jesus And The Law**”)
2. Which traditions had likely been accepted by the scribes and Pharisees

B. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION...

1. Is seen in the phrase “whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment”
2. The term “**judgment**” likely refers to the **local courts** of their day (see below)
3. This interpretation may sound fine, but evidently did not go far enough in how the Law should have been interpreted and applied
 - a. Was the Law only concerned about the actual act of murder?
 - b. Should the disciples of Jesus also limit their concern to actual acts of murder?

[To answer these two questions, let’s now take a closer look at...]

II. THE TEACHING OF JESUS

A. JESUS PRONOUNCED JUDGMENT ON ANGER...

1. As found in **Mt 5:22**...
 - a. One angry without a cause should be in danger of the “judgment”
 - 1) I.e., the local courts through Palestine
 - 2) Which were normally reserved for common criminals
 - b. One calling his brother “Raca!” (stupid) should be in danger of the “council”
 - 1) I.e., the Sanhedrin council

- 2) Which was the high court normally reserved for special criminals
- c. One who says “You fool!” would be in danger of “hell fire” (Gehenna)
 - 1) The place of everlasting torment - **Mk 9:43-48**
 - 2) The judgment normally accorded to murderers, Jesus deemed worthy of those whose anger led to just verbal abuse!
- 2. Jesus’ teaching was in harmony with the Law regarding anger - cf. **Pro 6:16-19**
 - a. “Hands that shed innocent blood” (murder) are an abomination to the Lord
 - b. So also a “heart that devises wicked plans” and “one who sows discord among brethren” (due to anger)
 - This being true, the Law should have been interpreted and applied accordingly
- 3. Thus the traditional interpretation and application of the Law fell far short
 - a. The **righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees** only condemned murderers when those with hateful emotions were just as guilty!
 - b. While the **righteousness of the kingdom** was in harmony with the intent of the Law
 - 1) The Law taught to forsake wrath and anger - **Psa 37:8**
 - 2) So does the righteousness of the kingdom - cf. **Ga 5:19-21; Ep 4:31**

B. JESUS ILLUSTRATED THE SERIOUSNESS OF ANGER...

- 1. We should not try to worship God when we are “at odds” with a brother - **Mt 5:23-24**
 - a. Repair strained relationships with a brother before worshipping God
 - b. A husband must treat his wife with understanding to have his prayers heard - **1 Pe 3:7**
 - The wrong emotions toward others can “kill” our relationship **with God!**
- 2. We should be quick to make amends lest uncontrolled anger cause us to wind up in court, possibly prison! - **Mt 5:25-26**
 - a. Many “hotheads” let anger prompt them to do things that send them to prison
 - b. But notice how those in the kingdom are to act - **Ro 12:18-21**
 - The wrong emotions can “murder” our relationships **with man** as well!

CONCLUSION

- 1. In His first contrast between the **righteousness of the kingdom** and the **traditional treatment of the Law**, Jesus illustrated how...
 - a. The ancients did not go far enough in applying the Law
 - b. It should be applied by those surpassing the **righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees**
 - c. The **righteousness of the kingdom** is actually in harmony with the Law!
- 2. Jesus also reminds us that there is **“The Anger That Kills”**...
 - a. Improper anger toward our fellow man can “kill” our relationship with God
 - b. It can “murder” our relationships with our fellow man, and ruin our lives in the process
 - One does not have to be guilty of actual murder to do this!

Thus Jesus calls upon us to deal with the anger that often leads to murder, if we desire to truly be His disciples! This requires that we be **“born again”**... - cf. **Jn 3:5; 1 Pe 1:22-23**

Nipping Adultery In The Bud

Matthew 5:27-30

INTRODUCTION

1. Though our society takes adultery lightly, it is a serious offense in the eyes of God...
 - a. He listed it right after murder in the Ten Commandments - **Exo 20:13-14**
 - b. He made it a capital offense in the Old Testament, worthy of the death penalty - **Lev 20:10**
 - c. God has promised to judge those who are adulterers - **He 13:4; 1 Co 6:9-10**
 - It destroys friendships, marriages, and families, and the lives of many children!
2. How can one avoid the sin of adultery...?
 - a. Is the solution one of just making sure that you don't commit the actual act?
 - b. Or is there way that one can "nip it in the bud"?
3. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus challenged His disciples...
 - a. To exceed "the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" - **Mt 5:20**
 - b. He illustrated what He meant through a series on contrasts
 - 1) Between what they had heard from those of old
 - 2) And what He was now declaring to them
4. In the second contrast (**Mt 5:27-30**), Jesus addressed the issue of adultery...
 - a. In which we learn where adultery really begins
 - b. And what steps can be taken to ward off committing such a serious offense whatever Jesus requires of us!

[On the subject of adultery, let's first note the contrast between...]

I. JESUS AND THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION

A. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION...

1. The oral traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees certainly repeated the written commandment found in the Law - **Mt 5:27**
2. But they evidently stressed that as long as one did not commit the actual act, one was not guilty
3. Thereby emphasizing the "letter" of the Law, but not appreciating the "spirit" behind the Law as well

B. JESUS TAUGHT DIFFERENTLY...

1. One does not have to commit the "act" to be guilty of adultery
2. One is just as guilty when one "looks at a woman to lust for her"
3. **Note:** Not the "looking" per se, but looking "to lust" for her is what is wrong
 - a. To "lust" means to have a strong desire for, to possess and dominate completely
 - b. A person may look at another with admiration for beauty and not be guilty of "lust"

C. JESUS' INTERPRETATION WAS IN HARMONY WITH THE LAW...

1. Notice that the Tenth Commandment condemned coveting a neighbor's wife - **Exo 20:17**

2. Even in Job's time, to "look at a woman to lust for her" was considered wrong - **Job 31:1**

[So the problem begins in the heart (cf. **Mk 7:21-23**). If we can prevent the lusting in the heart (or the "lustful eye"), the problem of adultery is "nipped in the bud"! Jesus goes on to say what we should do with respect to the lustful eye or any other stumbling blocks...]

II. JESUS' PROGNOSIS FOR LUSTFUL EYES AND OTHER STUMBLING BLOCKS

A. "PLUCK IT OUT AND CAST IT FROM YOU..."

1. It is clear Jesus is not being literal, for one could still stumble with the left eye or hand
2. The key to understanding this passage is found in **Mt 18:7-9**
 - a. The **eye** and **hand** represent "**offenses**"
 - b. Offenses are "**stumbling blocks**" that lead a person to sin
 - c. These would be enticements to do wrong, beguiling allurements

B. THE MEANING OF JESUS' TEACHING...

1. "Take drastic action in getting rid of whatever in the natural course of events will tempt you to sin" (**Hendriksen**)
2. Such should be the case in regards to all sin, as well as the sin of adultery

[As we contemplate Jesus' words, there are several...]

III. IMPORTANT LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

A. THE PRESENT IS NOT OUR ONLY LIFE; WE ARE DESTINED FOR ETERNITY!

1. The future holds the possibility of "**hell**" (Grk., Gehenna, the place of everlasting torment)
2. What we do or not do in the present will determine our place in the future

B. NOTHING, NO MATTER HOW PRECIOUS, SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DOOM OUR GLORIOUS DESTINY!

1. God's goal for us is the **kingdom of heaven** in all its eternal glory!
2. What on **earth** (such as an adulterous relationship) can be worthy of losing that?

C. SIN, BEING A VERY DESTRUCTIVE FORCE, MUST NOT BE PAMPERED!

1. Do we need to be convinced that sin (like adultery) is destructive to those around us?
2. Sin is to the soul what cancer is to the body
 - a. Delay can be deadly!
 - b. Halfway measures, halfhearted efforts, only give sin time to wreak havoc!
2. **Radical surgery** is what's necessary to treat the "**cancer**" of sin!
 - a. Cut off those things that might lead you to look upon others to lust after them
 - b. How much better to dwell upon such things as mentioned in **Ph 4:8**!
 - c. Remove all stumbling blocks that encourage you to sin!
 - 1) Such as certain books, movies, pictures
 - 2) Or possible companions, associates - cf. **1 Co 15:33**

-- As Paul exhorted the Corinthians, and Joseph illustrated by example, "flee sexual immorality"! - **1 Co 6:18; Gen 39:7-12**

CONCLUSION

1. Our families, our friends, our lives, and especially our souls are too precious to allow the sin of adultery to destroy them!
2. But if we desire to “nip it in the bud”, we cannot be content with the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees...
 - a. Who may have faithfully quoted the Law to others
 - b. But were unwilling to deal with the real problem, which is one of the heart!
3. In view of the reality of hell, the eternal abode of impenitent adulterers...
 - a. Let us be willing to tackle the **cancer of sin** seriously
 - b. Performing whatever **radical surgery** might be necessary!

While one may not be able to rebuild the lives destroyed by the sin of adultery, for the penitent adulterer there is still the hope of salvation in Christ Jesus, as there is for all... - cf. **1 Co 6:9-11**

The Treachery Of Divorce

Matthew 5:31-32

INTRODUCTION

1. We live in an age of easy divorce...
 - a. Many if not all states have “no-fault” divorce laws
 - b. In some cases, all it takes is for one person to decide to have a divorce, and their spouse can do nothing to prevent it
2. What does God think about divorce?
 - a. What was His view of divorce in the Old Testament?
 - b. What does He think of it now?
3. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus addressed the issue of divorce...
 - a. As He taught His disciples concerning the righteousness of the kingdom
 - b. In which He described the effects of divorcing one’s spouse

[In this lesson, “**The Treachery Of Divorce**”, we shall use **Mt 5:31-32** as our text. To understand Jesus’ comments in their context, let’s first determine what was...]

I. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION

A. “WHOEVER DIVORCES HIS WIFE, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE...” - Mt 5:31

1. This was the “traditional” interpretation of **Deu 24:1-4**; handed down orally
2. In applying the Law, they had focused on the idea of giving certificates of divorce
3. They concluded divorce was permissible as long as a certificate of divorce was given

B. IS THIS WHAT THE LAW ACTUALLY SAID...?

1. Please read **Deu 24:1-4** carefully...
 - a. Verses **1-3** simply describe a particular situation
 - 1) **When** a man is displeased with his wife and gives her a certificate a divorce and sends her out of the house...
 - 2) **When** she has left and becomes another man’s wife...
 - 3) **If** her second husband detests her and gives her a bill of divorcement and sends her out of his house, or **if** the second husband dies...
 - b. It is in verse **4** that Moses actually commands what must not be done
 - 1) Which was: “her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination to the Lord”
 - 2) This passage is simply forbidding a man to remarry his wife after she had been married to another - cf. **Jer 3:1**
2. Note also Paul’s understanding of the Law - cf. **Ro 7:1-3**
 - a. A woman was bound by the Law to her husband as long he lived
 - b. If she married another while her first husband was still living (implying a certificate of divorce was given), she became an adulteress (i.e., defiled)!

[So the scribes and Pharisees had interpreted the Law to permit divorce as long as a certificate of divorce was given to the wife. We have tried to point out that was not the case. What does Jesus say?]

II. JESUS' INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

A. "WHOEVER DIVORCES HIS WIFE FOR ANY REASON EXCEPT SEXUAL IMMORALITY CAUSES HER TO COMMIT ADULTERY..." - Mt 5:32

1. The only acceptable grounds for divorcing a wife is sexual immorality
2. Otherwise, divorcing a wife "causes her to commit adultery"
3. How? By placing her in a position where she is likely to remarry, in which she becomes an **adulteress**
4. This is what the Law implied in **Deu 24:4** and **Jer 3:1**
 - a. That is why the first husband couldn't take her back
 - b. Even if her second husband had died!
 - c. Because the wife had become **defiled!**
5. Notice these comments by **Keil & Delitzsch...**
 - a. "The second marriage of a woman who had been divorced is designated by Moses a defilement of the woman...a moral defilement, i.e., blemishing, desecration of the sexual communion which was sanctified by marriage, **in the same sense in which adultery is called a defilement in Lev 18:20 and Num 5:13,14...**"
 - b. "**Thus the second marriage of a divorced woman was placed implicit upon a par with adultery, and some approach was made towards the teaching of Christ concerning marriage (Mt 5:32)...**"
 - c. "If the second marriage of a divorced woman was a moral defilement, of course the wife could not marry the first again even after the death of her second husband... because the defilement of the wife would be thereby repeated, and even increased, as the moral defilement which the divorced wife acquired through the second marriage was not removed by a divorce from the second husband, nor yet by his death."
6. Jesus simply made clear what the Law itself implied: **To divorce a woman for any reason other than sexual immorality would cause her to be defiled (when she remarried)**
7. Therefore, I believe that a careful study of the Law concerning divorce reveals...
 - a. That Jesus' teaching was really in harmony with the Law itself
 - b. But the "traditional interpretation and application" of the Law had missed the mark by placing emphasis upon the mention of giving a certificate of divorce

B. "WHOEVER MARRIES A DIVORCED WOMAN COMMITS ADULTERY..."

1. Jesus goes on to say that anyone who marries a person who has been divorced (lit., "**put away**") also commits adultery!
2. Jesus does not use the definite article in reference to one put away, therefore He seems to refer to any "put away" person! In other words...
 - a. A person put away for reasons **other** than adultery cannot remarry
 - 1) Because such would "cause them to commit adultery"
 - 2) Or to put it in O.T. terms: "become defiled"
 - b. Nor can a person put away **for** the reason of adultery remarry
 - 1) For such a person is an "adulteress" or "adulterer"
 - 2) As such, is "defiled" and would thereby cause anyone who married that person to commit adultery!

CONCLUSION

1. Jesus later taught more concerning the subject of divorce and remarriage...
 - a. Defining who has the right to divorce their spouse and remarry - **Mt 19:3-9**
 - b. Indicating that some might need to “make themselves eunuchs” for the sake of the kingdom of heaven - **Mt 19:10-12**

2. But in our text (**Mt 5:31-32**), Jesus reveals “**The Treachery Of Divorce**”...
 - a. A man who divorces his wife for any cause other than sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery (by placing her in a situation where she is likely to remarry and become defiled; i.e., an adulteress)
 - b. Whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery
 - **The harmful effect of divorce is seen in that it creates situations where adultery is committed!**

3. Perhaps we can better understand why God hates divorce... - cf. **Mal 2:13-16**
 - a. When we put away our spouses, we treat them treacherously! - **Mal 2:14**
 - b. When we divorce our spouses, we cover our garments with violence! - **Mal 2:16**

4. Making divorce “legal” does not change the facts of the matter...
 - a. The one put away still becomes defiled (commits adultery) if they remarry
 - b. Whoever marries the one put away still commits adultery
 - **It is still a “treacherous” act!**

As difficult as Jesus’ teaching on the subject of divorce might seem in today’s permissive and immoral society, those who respect the authority of Jesus Christ will abide by His teaching.

Have you found yourself in an adulterous relationship? There is hope in Jesus Christ (cf. **1 Co 6:9-11**)! Yet true repentance requires that you stop committing adultery, even if it means becoming a “eunuch” for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (cf. **Mt 19:11-12**).

The Swearing Of Oaths

Matthew 5:33-37

INTRODUCTION

1. Are you a man or woman of your word...?
 - a. When you say “yes” or “no”, do people take it as “gospel” (i.e., truth)?
 - b. Are you someone whose word is questioned, unless confirmed with an oath?
2. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus dealt with the issue of swearing oaths...
 - a. In which He set a high standard for His disciples to follow
 - b. A standard that exceeded that of the scribes and Pharisees, and exceeds the standard followed by many people today
3. In this lesson, “**The Swearing Of Oaths**”, we shall consider what Jesus taught from the viewpoint of four questions...
 - a. What did the Law of Moses actually teach concerning the swearing of oaths?
 - b. How had the Jews, and in particular the Scribes and Pharisees, traditionally interpreted and applied the Law?
 - c. What did Jesus teach in response to this abuse of the Law concerning oaths?
 - d. Did Jesus forbid even those oaths made in court?

[To answer the first question, “**What did the Law of Moses actually teach concerning the swearing of oaths?**”, let’s take a moment to consider...]

I. THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE SWEARING OF OATHS

A. THREE PASSAGES MAKE VERY CLEAR THE TEACHING OF THE LAW...

1. “And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.” - **Lev 19:12**
2. “If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.” - **Num 30:2**
3. “When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you.” - **Deu 23:21**

B. THE EMPHASIS WAS ON TRUTHFULNESS AND FAITHFULNESS...

1. A person must be truthful when he swears an oath; he must truly mean it
2. He must also be faithful in keeping the oath; he must carry out his word

C. THIS EMPHASIS ON TRUTHFULNESS “IN THE HEART” WAS STRESSED BY THE PSALMS AND PROPHETS AS WELL...

1. In the Psalms - **Psa 15:1-2; 24:3-4**
2. The Prophets often bemoaned the lack of truth in the heart - **Jer 5:1-2; Hos 4:1-2**

[So the teaching of the Law was clear: Vows to the Lord should be kept, and truthfulness in all things was expected. This leads to our second question: **“How had the Jews, and in particular the Scribes and Pharisees, traditionally interpreted and applied the Law?”**]

II. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

A. IT APPEARS THE EMPHASIS HAD SHIFTED...

1. **From** truthfulness in all things
2. **To** honoring only those vows sworn “to the Lord”
- As implied by Jesus comments in **Mt 5:34-36**

B. IN APPLICATION, ONLY VOWS “TO THE LORD” WERE BINDING...

1. That some made such arbitrary distinctions between their vows is seen in **Mt 23:16-19**
2. Because of this distinction, daily conversations were often spiced with meaningless oaths to make impressions; for example:
 - a. “I swear by heaven”
 - b. “I swear by the throne of God”
 - c. “I swear...by the earth...by Jerusalem...by the altar...by the temple...by my head...”

[By shifting the emphasis from **truthfulness** to honoring only those vows made **to the Lord**, the Pharisees in their application of the Law justified the use of meaningless vows. Now to our third question: **“What did Jesus teach in response to this abuse of the Law concerning oaths?”**]

III. THE TEACHING OF JESUS

A. HE EXPOSED THE HYPOCRISY IN SUCH ARBITRARY DISTINCTIONS...

1. **Mt 23:20-22** clearly shows that when one swears by...
 - a. “the temple”
 - b. “the throne of God”
 ...he is swearing by the LORD also!
2. **Mt 5:34-36** likewise teaches that one cannot swear by these things without involving God
 - a. Heaven is the throne of God
 - b. Earth is His footstool
 - c. Only God can change our hair color (without the use of dyes)
- **Therefore, any oath is an oath “to the Lord”!**

B. HE ENJOINED TRUTHFULNESS IN THE HEART...

1. Let your “yes” mean “yes”
2. Let your “no” mean “no”
- Any more than this is evil, and contrary to speaking “truth in his heart” (**Psa 15:1-2**)

[In exposing the hypocritical distinctions made by the scribes and Pharisees in their oaths, and in commanding us to speak simply and truthfully, the words of Jesus have led many to ask our fourth and final question: **“Did Jesus forbid even those oaths made in court?”**]

IV. MAKING OATHS IN JUDICIAL MATTERS

A. ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF SWEARING JUDICIAL OATHS...

1. Both Jesus and James qualified their statements concerning oaths

- a. **Mt 5:34ff** - “swear not at all” is immediately qualified by Jesus to refer to flippant and hypocritical oaths commonly voiced by the people
- b. **Ja 5:12** - the command “do not swear” is also qualified by James to refer to the same kind of meaningless oaths
2. Also, consider the following points:
 - a. God has sworn an oath to us - **He 6:16-18**
 - b. Jesus was willing to answer under oath before the Sanhedrin court - **Mt 26:63-64**
 - c. Paul made solemn oaths in his epistles - **2 Co 1:23; Ga 1:20**
 - d. An angel of God swore an oath - **Re 10:5-7**

B. IN LIGHT OF THESE ARGUMENTS...

1. Some take Jesus and James to condemn only flippant, profane and hypocritical oaths...
 - a. Used to make impressions
 - b. Used to spice daily conversations
...but were never intended to be kept
2. Therefore the **exception** to not swearing oaths can be...
 - a. Solemn oaths made in judicial circumstances
 - b. Those oaths on occasions of solemn religious importance (as in the case of Paul)

C. I PREFER TO TAKE THE “SAFE” COURSE...

1. In other words, to “swear not at all”
2. Fortunately, in this country we are allowed the option to “confidently affirm”
-- But I would not judge brethren who themselves solemnly and honestly “swear oaths” in judicial circumstances

CONCLUSION

1. The righteousness of the kingdom is to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees...
 - a. They would often spice their statements with vows and oaths in order to be believed...
 - b. Christians are to be so truthful, their “yes” means “yes” and their “no” means “no”
-- So truthful and trustworthy are the disciples of Christ to be, it would not be necessary for them to swear oaths or have to say “I promise” in order to be trusted
2. Can this be said of us, when people know that we are Christians?
 - a. Can others “bank” on our words?
 - b. When we say we will do something, is it as good as done?

May the words of our Lord remind us that even our speech reflects either honor or dishonor upon the God we serve!

Responding To Evil

Matthew 5:38-42

INTRODUCTION

1. When someone treats you wrong, how do you respond?
 - a. Do you react in kind, treating evil with evil?
 - b. Do you just stand there and take whatever abuse is given?
-- What is the proper way to respond to evil?

2. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus taught concerning the righteousness of the kingdom...
 - a. He did so by contrasting it with the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees
 - 1) Noting how the Law had often been interpreted and applied
 - 2) Declaring what He expected of His disciples
 - b. We have seen Jesus contrast this “righteousness” in such matters as:
 - 1) Murder and anger - **Mt 5:21-26**
 - 2) Adultery - **Mt 5:27-30**
 - 3) Divorce - **Mt 5:31-32**
 - 4) Swearing Oaths - **Mt 5:33-37**

[In this lesson, we shall look at what Jesus taught concerning “vengeance” (**Mt 5:38-42**) as we discuss “**Responding To Evil**”. First, let’s compare...]

I. THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION

A. CONCERNING “AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH”...

1. The statement is found in **Exo 21:24-25**
2. A parallel passage is **Deu 19:21**

B. THESE STATEMENTS WERE LAWS FOR CIVIL COURTS TO APPLY...

1. Notice carefully **Deu 19:15-21; Exo 21:22-23**
2. They were given to guide the priests in meriting out proper punishment

C. WHAT THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES HAD DONE...

1. Interpreted these statements so as to justify **personal** retribution!
2. Applied them by taking matters of revenge into their own hands (as many do today!)

D. THE LAW REPEATEDLY FORBAD PERSONAL VENGEANCE...

1. Consider **Lev 19:18; Pro 20:22; 24:29**
2. In both Old Testament and New Testaments, the matter of vengeance was to be left up to God and His duly appointed agent: **civil government!** - cf. **Ro 12:19; 13:1-4**

[There really is no difference between the Law and what we find in the New Testament in this regard: Personal vengeance has no place in the lives of those who are the children of God! Now let’s examine more closely...]

II. THE PROPER RESPONSE TO EVIL

A. JESUS PROCLAIMED TWO PRINCIPLES...

1. **Do not resist an evil person (39a)**
 - a. Not only should you not take vengeance into your own hands...
 - b. But don't even oppose (resist) the evil person when the evil is being done!
2. **Respond to evil by doing good! (39b-42)**
 - a. Jesus illustrates this principle with several examples...
 - 1) Responding to **physical abuse (39b)**
 - a) "Turn the other cheek"
 - b) This may refer to offering the other cheek as an expression of love
 - 2) Responding to a **civil suit**, by giving more than what the person is suing! (**40**)
 - 3) Responding to **government oppression**, by offering to do more than what is being demanded of you! (**41**)
 - 4) Responding to **those asking for help**, by giving them what they ask! (**42**)
 - b. In each case, the principle is the same
 - 1) We are not to resist the person...
 - a) Who would mistreat us
 - b) Who would try to deprive us of our possessions
 - 2) Instead, respond in a positive manner...
 - a) Demonstrate love towards them
 - b) Do so by freely giving them **more** than they were hoping to gain by force, oppression, or manipulation!

B. IS THIS TO BE TAKEN LITERALLY...?

1. Why not?
 - a. We have several O.T. examples...
 - 1) **Joseph**, in forgiving his brothers - **Gen 45:4-15**
 - 2) **David**, in sparing the life of Saul - **1 Sam 24:8-15**
 - 3) **Elisha**, in feeding the army of the Arameans - **2 Kin 6:8-23**
 - b. We also have several N.T. examples...
 - 1) **Jesus**, our prime example - **1 Pe 2:20-23**
 - 2) **Stephen**, when he was being stoned - **Ac 7:59-60**
 - 3) The **Hebrew Christians**, who "joyfully accepted" the plundering of their goods - **He 10:32-34**
 - c. We have the clear teaching of Paul in **Ro 12:19-21**...
 - 1) We are not to avenge ourselves
 - 2) We must seek to overcome evil with good
2. If not, then how do we apply these words of Jesus?
 - a. What does Jesus mean?
 - b. Give some examples of how to apply these teachings... ???

C. ARE WE TO APPLY IT UNCONDITIONALLY...?

1. I.e., must we decide who is "worthy" to receive this kind of treatment?
 - a. Jesus does not give us any indication that we are to use "discretion"
 - b. Paul does give some qualifying instructions (e.g., **2 Th 3:10**)...
 - 1) But it applies to those who are Christians
 - 2) And we have a responsibility to "judge" those in the church, leaving those outside to God - **1 Co 5:9-13**
2. I do find striking the attitude of the Christians of the second century, A.D....

- a. “Do good, and give liberally to all who are in need from the wages God gives you. Do not hesitate about to whom you should not give. Give to all. For God wishes gifts to be made to all out of His bounties.” (**Hermas, 135 A.D.**)
- b. “And he said to love not only our neighbors but also our enemies, and to be givers and sharers not only with the good but also to be liberal givers towards those who take away our possessions.” (**Irenaeus, 185 A.D.**)
- c. “Do not judge those who is worthy and who is unworthy, for it is possible for you to be mistaken in your opinion. In the uncertainty of ignorance it is better to do good to the unworthy for the sake of the worthy, than by guarding against those who are less good not to encounter the good. For by sparing and trying to test those who are well-deserving or not, it is possible for you to neglect some who are loved by God, the penalty for which is the eternal punishment of fire. But by helping all those in need in

turn

you must assuredly find some who are able to save you before God.” (**Clement of Alexandria, 190 A.D.**)

- These statements were written at a time when Christians were constantly mistreated, abused, and manipulated by others!
3. The teachings of Jesus in this passage are admittedly challenging...
 - a. It is opposed to what we might call “**human nature**”
 - b. But we are called upon to be “**partakers of the divine nature**” (**2 Pe 1:4**); in other words, to be more like God than men
 4. As we will see in the next lesson, it is in order to be truly “sons of your Father in heaven” that Jesus teaches a standard of righteousness that far exceeds...
 - a. That of the scribes and Pharisees
 - b. That of most people today!
 5. At the very least, let us expend as much energy...
 - a. In seeing how we can apply this passage to lives...
 - b. ...as many do trying to explain how it doesn’t really mean what it appears to say!

CONCLUSION

1. Summarizing the teaching of Jesus concerning “**Responding To Evil**”...
 - a. We are not to resist evil
 - b. We are to respond by doing good in turn
2. We may never face the exact situations Jesus used to illustrate His point...
 - a. But the principles can be applied to so many things we do face
 - b. E.g., how people treat us at work, in our communities, in our own families, in the church

Whenever mistreated, take the challenge to see how you might overcome evil with good. Then your righteousness will exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees!

Acting Like Our Father

Matthew 5:43-48

INTRODUCTION

1. When Jesus spoke about “**Responding To Evil**”, He laid down two principles:
 - a. Do not resist an evil person - **Mt 5:39a**
 - b. Respond to evil by doing good - **Mt 5:39b-42**
2. This is certainly a challenging task Jesus put before His disciples...
 - a. It is tempting to respond to evil in kind
 - b. Especially when the mistreatment comes from an enemy!
3. But in the text for this lesson (**Mt 5:43-48**)...
 - a. We find Jesus teaching concerning the treatment of our enemies
 - b. We are told why we ought to act in the manner described in **Mt 5:38-42**

[Keeping in mind the context of the sermon on the mount, let’s first compare...]

I. THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION

A. THE LAW DID NOT SAY “HATE YOUR ENEMY”...

1. It did teach to “love your neighbor as yourself” - **Lev 19:18**
2. But it also taught kindness was to be shown to your enemy - **Exo 23:4-5; Pro 25:21-22**

B. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION HAD MISAPPLIED THE LAW...

1. Though it did enjoin the command to “love your neighbor”...
2. It inferred from this command one had the right to “hate your enemy” - **Mt 5:43**
 - a. “This phrase is not in Lev 19:18, but is a rabbinical inference which Jesus repudiates bluntly. The Talmud says nothing of love to enemies.” (**Word Pictures In The New Testament, Vol. I, Robertson**)
 - b. “The rabbis corrupted Lev 19:18, which sums up the Law of Israel, by adding ‘and hate your enemy.’ By thus tampering with Scripture, they intended to define their neighbors to include only Jews and to exclude Samaritans and Gentiles.” (**Believers’ Study Bible**)

[Having noted the difference between what the Law actually taught and the wrong interpretation given by the scribes and Pharisees, let’s now consider what Jesus taught on...]

II. HOW TO TREAT OUR ENEMIES

A. JESUS REQUIRES THAT WE...

1. “**Love**” our enemies
 - a. Not hate them
 - b. Rather, show “active good will” towards them
2. “**Bless**” those who curse us
 - a. They may speak evil of us

- b. But in response we are to speak kindly of them
- 3. **“Do good”** to those who hate us
 - a. They may either ignore us or do evil things to us
 - b. Yet we are to treat them kindly in either case
- 4. **“Pray”** for those who spitefully use us and persecute us
 - a. Notice, we are to pray FOR them, not just about them
 - b. I.e., pray for their well-being, salvation, etc.

B. THIS IS AN EXPANSION OF THE PRINCIPLES IN VERSES 39-42...

- 1. Don't seek vengeance!
- 2. Don't resist an evil person!
- 3. Instead, react by manifesting aggressive love!

[Why should we respond to our enemies in this way? Jesus goes on to provide...]

III. REASONS TO REACT IN THIS WAY

A. “THAT YOU MAY BE SONS OF YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN”...

- 1. That is, to demonstrate ourselves to be truly His children! - **Mt 5:45a**
- 2. What is our Father like?
 - a. He gives material blessings to both the evil and the good, both the righteous and the unrighteous - **Mt 5:45b**
 - b. He is kind to the unthankful and evil - **Lk 6:35-36**
 - c. He offered His Son while we were yet sinners and enemies! - **Ro 5:8,10**
 - d. He loved us before we loved Him - **1 Jn 4:10**
- 3. As taught elsewhere, we are to imitate our Heavenly Father - **1 Jn 4:11; Ep 4:31-5:2**

B. OR WE ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN “TAX-COLLECTORS”...

- 1. In Jesus' day, they were despised by the Jews, because they made themselves rich by collecting taxes from their fellowmen for the Roman government
- 2. And yet, these tax-collectors would...
 - a. Love those who loved them
 - b. Greet cordially those who greeted them
- 3. We are no different if our love is limited to our “brethren” or “friends”! - **Mt 5:46-47**

C. ONLY THEN WILL WE BE “PERFECT”...

- 1. The word “perfect” means “brought to completion, full-grown, lacking nothing”
- 2. In this context, it has reference to the matter of showing love and mercy; compare:
 - a. “Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.” - **Lk 6:36**
 - b. “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” - **Mt 5:48**
- 3. When we display love and mercy to our enemies...
 - a. We are “complete,” “full-grown” in demonstrating love
 - b. Just like our Father when He shows kindness to evil and unthankful men!

CONCLUSION

- 1. If we really want to be...
 - a. “Sons of your Father in heaven”
 - b. “Perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect”

2. It is imperative that we be influenced...
 - a. More by the teachings and example of the Son of God
 - b. Than by the attitudes and example of the “tax-collectors”!

Are you “**Acting Like Our Father**” who is in heaven? Or do you emulate the most carnal people around us? May the “sayings” (cf. **Mt 7:28**) of our Lord provoke us to consider the proper way to respond to our enemies and to any who might abuse us!

Charity That Pleases God

Matthew 6:1-4

INTRODUCTION

1. Are you a charitable person...?
 - a. If so, are you sure that your charity is pleasing to God?
 - b. Were you aware that some forms of charity actually displease God?
2. In Jesus' day, there were religious people who were extremely charitable...
 - a. The Pharisees, for example, would give ten percent to God - e.g., **Lk 18:11-12**
 - b. They tithed even the smallest of seeds - **Lk 11:42**
 - But as indicated in these two cases, not all charity or giving pleased God
3. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus taught His disciples to have a righteousness which exceeded that of the Pharisees - **Mt 5:20**
 - a. Jesus first contrasted the "righteousness of the kingdom" with what the scribes and Pharisees were **teaching**
 - b. He then contrasted what He expected of His disciples with what the scribes and Pharisees were **practicing**

[In **Mt 6:1-4**, we find the first of several examples concerning the practice of righteousness. In it, we learn about "**Charity That Pleases God.**" Note first what Jesus taught about...]

I. THE BASIC PRINCIPLE GOVERNING ACTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (1)

A. CONCERNING THIS VERSE...

1. Some manuscripts, upon which the KJV and NKJV are based, have the Greek word **eleemosunen**
 - a. Translated "alms", or "charitable deeds"
 - b. Which would make this verse refer specifically to almsgiving, or charitable deeds
2. Older manuscripts, upon which the ASV and NASV are based, have the Greek word **dikaiosunen**
 - a. Translated "righteousness"
 - b. Which would make verse one speaking in general terms, establishing the principle to be applied to all acts of righteousness
- Textual support seems strongest for **dikaiosunen**, making verse one **an introductory statement** concerning **all** righteous acts

B. THE BASIC PRINCIPLE...

1. Stated simply: we are not to do acts of righteousness to be seen of men - **Mt 6:1a**
 - a. It is **not** to completely avoid **any** practice of righteousness before men - **Mt 5:16**
 - b. Rather, it is to avoid doing them **just to be seen of men**
2. Therefore, it is proper to do good works before men...
 - a. When we are trying to secure praise for **God**
 - b. But not when we are trying to secure praise for **ourselves!**

C. CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORING THIS BASIC PRINCIPLE...

1. If, in the innermost being of your heart, you do not mean to please and glorify God, He will not reward you!
2. What reward you may have (cf. **Mt 6:2,5,16**) will be limited to the praise of men

[Let's now consider how Jesus applies this to the matter of charitable deeds...]

II. CONCERNING CHARITABLE DEEDS (2-4)

A. WHAT NOT TO DO...

1. Don't be like the "hypocrites" (literally, "actors") - **Mt 6:2a**
 - a. Who sound trumpets in the synagogues and streets
 - b. Who are looking to be honored by **men**
2. "They have their reward" - **Mt 6:2b**
 - a. They receive exactly (and only) what they wanted: the praise of men
 - b. But remember verse one...
 - 1) They have no reward from the Father in heaven
 - 2) Neither in the present or in the future!

B. CHARITY THAT PLEASES GOD...

1. "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" - **Mt 6:3**
 - a. This involves avoiding not only the praise of others, but self praise as well
 - b. Some thoughts by others on what this metaphor means:
 - 1) "The right [hand], [represents] me with my good deed; the left, me with my good opinion about my deed." (**Lenski**)
 - 2) "The expression probably refers to the fact that as much as possible a person must keep his voluntary contribution a secret not only to others but even to himself; that is, he should forget about it, instead of saying in his heart, 'What a good man, woman, boy, girl, am I!'" (**Hendricksen**)
 - c. How can one develop the ability to give in this way?
 - 1) Perhaps by giving so often it becomes "second nature"
 - 2) So that you do it without much thought (just as with anything you do often)
2. Note: Jesus is not condemning public giving per se - cf. **Ac 2: 44-45; 4:34-37**
 - a. He is condemning the spirit which seeks publicity
 - b. He is teaching "secret-giving" in the sense of "secret to one's self"
 - c. "The true Christian cares not how much men hear of his public charities, nor how little they hear of his private ones." (**Toplady**)

C. THE REWARD FOR CHARITY THAT PLEASES GOD...

1. "Your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly." - **Mt 6:4**
2. The reward may be experienced to some degree in this life - **Psa 41:1-3**
3. Without a doubt it will be experienced on the day of judgment
 - a. For every secret thing will be made known - **Ecc 12:14**
 - b. We will experience the benefit of the good we have done - **2 Co 5:10**

CONCLUSION

1. Christians who have been blessed materially have been given a charge to be "rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" - **1 Ti 6:17-19**

2. But if we desire that our charity will indeed store up “a good foundation for the time to come”...
 - a. We must be sure to practice **“Charity That Pleases God”**
 - b. We must learn to give, not to be seen of men, but to glorify God
 - c. We must learn to give without self-praise for what we are doing

Does our charitable deeds exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees in Jesus’ day, not only in quantity, but in the quality of our giving? May the Lord keep us free from the giving of hypocrites!

Prayer That Pleases God

Matthew 6:5-15

INTRODUCTION

1. A wonderful privilege enjoyed by the children of God is prayer...
 - a. Through prayer we can receive mercy and grace to help in time of need - **He 4:14-16**
 - b. Through prayer we can find peace that guards our hearts and mind - **Ph 4:6-7**
2. But the privilege of prayer assumes that God will heed our prayers...
 - a. Not all prayers are acceptable to God - cf. **Pro 28:9**
 - b. Indeed, God does not hear the prayers of all men - cf. **Isa 59:1-2; 1 Pe 3:12**
 - c. Jesus described the prayer of one man which did not please God - **Lk 18:9-14**
3. Do we know what qualifies as **“Prayer That Pleases God”**?
 - a. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus had much to say about prayer
 - b. Especially the kind of prayer which finds favor in God’s sight

[In this study, let’s take a look at **Mt 6:5-15**, where Jesus taught His disciples regarding prayer. First, we find Jesus telling us...]

I. WHAT NOT TO DO IN REGARDS TO PRAYER

A. DO NOT BE LIKE THE HYPOCRITES...

1. Who love to pray...
 - a. Standing in the synagogues
 - b. On the corners of the streets
2. This they do “that they may be seen of men” - **Mt 6:5**

B. “THEY HAVE THEIR REWARD...”

1. That is, they are indeed seen by men
2. But that is the extent of their reward (the praise of men)
3. They have no reward or blessing from God!

C. JESUS IS NOT CONDEMNING ALL PUBLIC PRAYING...

1. Evident from the fact that He Himself prayed in public - **Mt 11:25; Jn 11:41**
2. As did Paul - **Ac 27:35**

[The emphasis is the same as stated in **Mt 6:1**, “do not do your [deeds of righteousness] before men, **to be seen by them.**” How, then, are we to pray as to be heard by God...?]

II. ELEMENTS OF PROPER PRAYER

A. OFFERED TO BE SEEN OF GOD, NOT MEN...

1. This is the main idea of “praying in secret” - **Mt 6:6**
2. “The sincere and humble worshiper, one who is not interested in making a public display for the sake of enhancing his prestige, will find the secluded nook or den to be most

appropriate for his devotions." (unknown)

3. The person who prays much in secret is praying to be seen of God, not men!

B. OFFERED TO BE HEARD OF GOD, NOT MEN...

1. Avoiding the use of "vain repetitions" - **Mt 6:7**
 - a. As was often practiced by the heathen religions
 - b. "The heathen tried to tire out their gods with such endless prayers. Mere formulas were repeated over and over again; the Jews had such prayer formulas, Catholics also have them in the form of their rosary." (**Lenski**)
2. This is not condemning all repetition, but "vain" (insincere, useless) repetition
 - a. Jesus repeated Himself in prayer at Gethsemane - **Mt 26:36-44**
 - b. Paul repeated his requests concerning his "thorn in the flesh" - **2 Co 12:7-8**
3. Since "your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him," prayers to be heard by God do not have to be filled with superfluous words
 - a. Have you ever noted the brevity of prayers recorded in the Scriptures?
 - b. God is not swayed the by quantity of words, but by the quality of the heart!

C. OFFERED ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN...

1. The phrase "in this manner" suggests that this prayer...
 - a. Is a **pattern** for praying
 - b. Not a **liturgical exercise** as sometimes practiced
2. The pattern of proper prayer:
 - a. **First, simplicity**
 - 1) Notice the word "therefore"
 - a) It connects what follows with what was said before
 - b) Jesus' pattern for prayer is an "illustration" in contrast to the "many words" used by the heathen
 - 2) In the prayer itself, note the brevity of words
 - b. Then, in its **content**, proper prayer includes...
 - 1) Reverence for God and His "Name" (i.e., His being and character) - **Mt 6:9**
 - 2) Prayer for the progress of God's Kingdom and His Will on the earth - **Mt 6:10**
 - 3) Asking for physical necessities - **Mt 6:11**
 - 4) Also, our spiritual needs
 - a) Forgiveness of sins - **Mt 6:12**
 - b) Protection and deliverance from evil - **Mt 6:13**
 - 5) Praising God - **Mt 6:13**

D. OFFERED WITH A MERCIFUL SPIRIT...

1. As indicated in the pattern prayer itself - **Mt 6:12,14-15**
2. Otherwise, we cannot expect mercy for ourselves - cf. **Mt 18:21-23; Ja 2:13**
3. This must be very important to Jesus, for this is the only part of the pattern He upon which He elaborates!

CONCLUSION

1. This is not the only occasion in which Jesus taught on prayer...
 - a. Later, His disciples would ask Him to teach them to pray - **Lk 11:1-4**
 - b. He taught them about the importance of persistence, faith and humility in prayer - **Lk 11:5-13; 18:1-14**

2. But in this sermon Jesus sought to stress prayer that is designed...
 - a. To be seen by God, not man
 - b. To be heard by God, not man
- Who knows better what kind of prayer that is, than He who now sits at the right hand of God!

If we believe that God hears prayer (**Psa 65:2**) and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (**He 11:6**), then let's be sure we offer the kind of **“Prayer That Pleases God”!**

Fasting That Pleases God

Matthew 6:16-18

INTRODUCTION

1. You don't hear much about fasting these days
 - a. In a culture where the landscape is dotted with shrines to the “**Golden Arches**” and an assortment of “**Pizza Temples**”...
 - b. ...fasting seems out of place, out of step with the times
2. But the Scriptures have much to say about fasting...
 - a. There is more teaching in the NT on fasting than repentance and confession!
 - b. Jesus taught more on fasting than on baptism and the Lord's Supper!
 - Yet some question whether fasting is something for Christians today
3. In His sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught concerning “**Fasting That Pleases God**”...
 - a. In connection with other acts of righteousness like charity and prayer
 - b. In calling His disciples to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees

[In this study, we will examine **Mt 6:16-18**, and consider what Jesus had to say about “**Fasting That Pleases God.**” But in so doing, let's begin by answering a few questions...]

I. SHOULD CHRISTIANS FAST TODAY?

A. THE EXAMPLE AND TEACHING OF JESUS...

1. He fasted during his forty day period of temptation in the wilderness - **Lk 4:1-2**
2. In His teaching on the subject of fasting:
 - a. He assumed His disciples would fast -- He said “when,” not “if” - **Mt 6:16-17**
 - b. He said they would fast when He was gone - **Mt 9:14-15**
 - c. He taught:
 - 1) How to fast so as to incur God's good pleasure - **Mt 6:16-18**
 - 2) When done properly, fasting would incur God's good pleasure - **Mt 6:18b**
 - 3) Fasting should be done only when appropriate - **Mt 9:16-17**
 - 4) There were occasions when prayer needed to be joined with fasting - **Mt 17:20-21**

B. THE EXAMPLES OF FASTING IN THE EARLY CHURCH...

1. The brethren at Antioch - **Ac 13:1-3**
 - a. Fasting in their service to the Lord
 - b. Fasting and praying as they send out Paul and Barnabas
2. The churches in Galatia - **Ac 14:21-23**
 - a. Done in **every** church
 - b. When appointing elders

C. THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL FASTING AS A MINISTER...

1. He listed fasting among things which proved him as a minister of Christ - cf. **2 Co 11:23-28**
2. Are we not commanded to imitate him, even as he imitated Christ? - **1 Co 11:1** (and both fasted in their service to God!)

[At the very least, we can say that it is not inappropriate for Christians to fast today. Unless we have medical reasons not to fast, we have very good examples to motivate us to fast! But to be sure that we fast for the right reason, we should answer another question...]

II. WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS FAST?

A. PEOPLE OFTEN FAST TODAY FOR VARIOUS REASONS...

1. Some do it solely for health reasons
2. Others do it only in times of grief and sorrow
3. Still others do it as a way to gain self-control
- But these are not reasons Christians should fast in their service to God - **Co 2:20-23**

B. CHRISTIANS SHOULD FAST WHEN SEEKING DIVINE HELP...

1. In the Old Testament; people of God fasted...
 - a. In times of war, or at the threat of it (Israel)
 - b. When loved ones were sick (David)
 - c. When seeking God's forgiveness (Ahab, Daniel)
 - d. When seeking God's protection (Ezra)
2. In the New Testament; fasting occurred...
 - a. When dealing with temptations (Jesus)
 - b. When serving the Lord (the church at Antioch)
 - c. When beginning a work for the Lord (again at Antioch)
 - d. When selecting and appointing elders (in Galatia)
3. Such fasting should be done in conjunction with prayer
 - a. For fasting, when done properly...
 - 1) Humbles the soul - **Psa 35:13**
 - 2) Chastens the soul - **Psa 69:10**
 - b. The prayers of the humble are more likely to be heard! - cf. **Ezr 8:21-23**

[This being true, this should help us to answer the next question specifically...]

III. WHEN SHOULD CHRISTIANS FAST?

A. WHENEVER WE DESIRE GOD'S HELP...

1. These may be occasions **on an individual level**
 - a. When faced with difficult temptations
 - b. When faced with the serious illness of a loved one
2. These occasions might be **on a congregational level**
 - a. As when appointing elders
 - b. As when sending out missionaries

B. WHENEVER SITUATIONS CALL FOR PERSISTENT PRAYER...

1. Such would be an occasion for fasting joined with prayer
2. Are we not taught that God is more likely to answer our prayers...
 - a. If we are persistent? - cf. **Lk 18:1-8**
 - b. If we fast in the proper way? - cf. **Mt 6:17-18**

[So whenever there is a matter requiring much prayer, fasting in conjunction with such prayer would be appropriate. Finally, let's take a look at...]

IV. FASTING THAT PLEASURES GOD

A. NOT TO BE SEEN OF MEN...

1. As practiced by the hypocrites of Jesus' day, it involved:
 - a. Doing so with a "sad countenance"
 - b. Doing so with "disfigured faces" (perhaps by applying ashes?)
 - The only good such fasting might do them is win the praise of men, but certainly not of God! - **Mt 6:16**
2. Rather, our fasting is to be seen of God
 - a. To be done without any outward appearance of fasting - **Mt 6:17**
 - 1) Therefore, it should include "anointing your head"
 - 2) Also, "washing your face"
 - I.e., what people would normally do to as part of their daily ablutions
 - b. By doing this, only God will see your fasting and He will reward you openly (perhaps by answering prayers offered while fasting) - **Mt 6:18**

B. NOT AS SOME REGULAR RITUAL...

1. This point Jesus made in **Mt 9:14-17**
2. It should be done only when the occasion calls for it (such as situations where you would already be spending much time in prayer)

C. NOT WITHOUT TRUE REPENTANCE...

1. Cf. **Isa 58:3-9**
2. All the praying, all the fasting, is of no avail if it is not accompanied with penitent obedience on our part

D. SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS...

1. Don't go out and fast just because it sounds like "a neat thing to do"
 - a. Take the subject seriously and prayerfully
 - b. Fast only when the occasion is a serious one
 - c. One in which you desperately desire God's help
2. If you have never fasted before...
 - a. Start slow, fast only for brief periods of time
 - b. End slow, gradually breaking your fast with fresh fruits and vegetables in small amounts
3. Fast when you have time to spend in prayerful meditation
 - a. Remember the purpose for fasting
 - b. To humble oneself in God's sight; to seek a favorable answer to prayer for some important plea

CONCLUSION

1. There is much more that could be said on the subject of fasting
2. But I hope this suffices to stimulate our thinking on a subject which has often been neglected in both study and practice

3. But implied in Jesus' teachings is that His disciples would fast, and so it is important that we know what is involved in **“Fasting That Pleases God”**

Now as useful as fasting might be, praying and fasting alone cannot save a person who is lost. Paul found this out when he fasted three days after coming to believe in Jesus as the Lord (**Ac 9:3-9; 22:6-16**). Have you heeded what Paul was told to do?

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Ac 22:16)

Gaining Mastery Over Mammon

Matthew 6:19-24

INTRODUCTION

1. In writing to Timothy, Paul described the danger of seeking to be rich...
 - a. The desire to be rich is filled with temptations which have destroyed many - **1 Ti 6:9**
 - b. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil which have led many astray - **1 Ti 6:10**
2. Jesus also described the difficulty of the rich entering the kingdom of heaven...
 - a. When the rich young ruler asked concerning eternal life - **Mt 19:16-22**
 - b. Jesus said it was difficult, but not impossible - **Mt 19:23-26**
3. In **Mt 6:19-24**, Jesus taught how it was possible...
 - a. For the rich person to have “treasure in heaven”
 - b. For us to overcome “mammon”, which can easily enslave us
4. According to Easton's Bible Dictionary, “**mammon**” is...
 - a. A Chaldee or Syriac word meaning “wealth” or “riches” - **Lk 16:9-11**
 - b. By personification, the god of riches - **Mt 6:24**
5. Thus if we are not careful, wealth and riches can become our “god”...
 - a. Paul called a covetous person an idolater - **Ep 5:5**
 - b. He told the Colossians to put to death “covetousness, which is idolatry” - **Co 3:5**

[To prevent Mammon from become our “god”, let’s examine the teachings of our Lord as found in His sermon on the mount. Beginning with **Mt 6:19**, we find the first of three keys to “**Gaining Mastery Over Mammon**”...]

I. LAY UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN (19-21)

A. WHY IN HEAVEN, AND NOT ON EARTH...

1. On **earth**:
 - a. Moth and rust destroy (i.e., material things are perishable)
 - b. Thieves break in and steal (material things are subject to theft)
2. In **heaven**:
 - a. Neither moth nor rust destroys (our treasures are imperishable - **1 Pe 1:3-4**)
 - b. Thieves do not break in and steal (our treasures are securely guarded - **1 Pe 3:4-5**)

B. WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR “HEART” (AFFECTIONS, HOPE, DREAMS) WILL BE ALSO...

1. If your treasure is on **earth**, your heart will experience much disappointment
 - a. As things for which you have affection decay or are one day destroyed by fire
 - b. As things in which you find your primary joy are suddenly gone through things like theft
2. But if your treasure is in **heaven**, your heart will not suffer great disappointments
 - a. For your treasure is “incorruptible, undefiled, and does not fade away”
 - b. Nothing can take your treasure away from you, for it is:

- 1) “reserved in heaven for you”
- 2) “kept by the power of God through faith”
3. With treasures laid up in heaven, whatever happens on earth will not devastate you! - cf. the Hebrew Christians in **He 10:32-34**
4. When these words of Jesus are taken to heart and applied, how true His words in **Mt 7:24-27** will be!
 - a. The “storms” of life will not overwhelm us
 - b. Because we’ve built our foundation upon the words of Jesus found in our text!

C. HOW CAN WE LAY UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN...?

1. First, by becoming children of God...
 - a. Thereby becoming “joint-heirs with Christ” - **Ro 8:16-17**
 - b. And the recipients of “every spiritual blessing” in heavenly places - **Ep 1:3**
2. Then, by using material wealth we may have to bless those around us...
 - a. As Jesus instructed the rich young ruler - **Mt 19:21**
 - b. As He instructed His disciples, in order to have “a treasure in the heavens that does not fail” - **Lk 12:33-34**
 - c. As Paul wrote Timothy to charge those rich in this present age, that they may be “storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” - **1 Ti 6:17-19**

[Through such generosity and liberality, then, we are well on the way to “**Gaining Mastery Over Mammon.**” At the same time, we need to make sure that we observe the second key...]

II. KEEP YOUR EYE GOOD (22-23)

A. IN THE METAPHOR USED BY JESUS...

1. The “**body**” likely represents the “soul” or “inner man”
2. The “**eye**” likely represents the “gaze of the soul” or the “heart of man”
3. The word “**good**” in Greek means “simple, single, uncomplicated”
4. The word “**bad**” in Greek means “wicked, evil”
5. And in the Scriptures, the expression “**evil eye**” is used to mean “envious, covetous” - cf. **Pro 23:6; Mt 20:15; Mk 7:22**

B. AN EXPLANATION BASED UPON THESE DEFINITIONS...

1. If the heart or gaze of the soul be **good** (“single” in its love of God and the things of God)...
 - a. Then one is filled with **light**
 - b. In other words, goodness, righteousness, and truth - cf. **Ep 5:8-10**
2. But if the heart or gaze of the soul be **evil** (full of envy, covetousness)...
 - a. Then one's soul is filled with **darkness**
 - b. The opposite of light: selfishness, wickedness, and falsehood!

C. THUS THE NEED FOR THE WARNING...

1. To guard what goes in your eye
 - a. I.e., what you allow your eyes to dwell upon
 - b. Remember, there is such a thing as “the lusts of the eyes” (i.e., **materialism**)
2. To be rich toward God, free from covetousness - cf. **Lk 12:13-21**
 - a. Note Jesus’ warning - **Lk 12:15**
 - b. Also His conclusion - **Lk 12:21**

[The third and last key to “**Gaining Mastery Over Mammon**” is most crucial, and will make it impossible for one to serve Mammon...]

III. MAKE GOD YOUR MASTER (24)

A. NO ONE CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS...

1. A “master” by definition demands “total loyalty”, and we are unable to please two masters at the same time
2. Such is certainly true with God - cf. **Exo 34:14**
3. Mammon is evidently no different

B. WE HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN GOD AND MAMMON...

1. When wealth is coveted, and becomes the priority in our lives, it becomes a “god” - cf. **Ep 5:5; Co 3:5**
2. So the choice is whether we shall worship the One True God, or be “idolaters” following after a false god!

C. CHOOSE TO SERVE GOD...

1. As Jesus would later say, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” - **Mt 6:33**
2. Do this, and God becomes our Master
3. Since we can’t serve two masters, this effectively eliminates Mammon from being our god!

CONCLUSION

1. These are the three keys to “**Gaining Mastery Over Mammon**”...
 - a. Lay up treasure in heaven (by helping others)
 - b. Keep your eye good (guard what you allow to influence your inner man)
 - c. Make God your Master (and you will not be able to serve another Master)
2. Why seek to gain mastery over mammon and serve God instead?
 - a. Because **Mammon**...
 - 1) Is susceptible to decay and theft
 - 2) Will make us blind, selfish creatures
 - b. Whereas with **God**...
 - 1) Our treasures are secure
 - 2) We will be kind, righteous people
3. By gaining mastery over Mammon we will also avoid...
 - a. Falling into a temptation and a snare
 - b. Falling into many foolish and harmful lusts
 - c. Straying from the faith because of greediness
 - d. Piercing ourselves with many sorrows - cf. **1 Ti 6:9-10**

But most importantly, Christians will be “storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come”, and “lay hold on eternal life” (**1 Ti 6:17-19**). Isn’t that what we really want?

Winning The War Over Worry

Matthew 6:25-34

INTRODUCTION

1. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus exhorted His disciples to...
 - a. Lay up treasure in heaven (by helping others)
 - b. Keep your eye good (guard what you allow to influence your inner man)
 - c. Make God your Master (and you will not be able to serve another Master)
 - Which we examined in the lesson “Gaining Mastery Over Mammon” (Mt 6:19-24)
2. But if we do what Jesus says, what about the future here on earth?
 - a. If we lay up treasure in heaven instead of on earth, how will we provide for our future?
 - b. Where will our physical necessities like food and clothing come from?
 - c. How can we keep from worrying about such things?
3. Jesus’ discussion concerning material riches (i.e., “mammon”) did not end with vs. 24...
 - a. It really continues on to the end of the chapter
 - b. In which Jesus addresses such concerns regarding the future

[Beginning with vs. 25, Jesus gives several reasons why we should not worry about such things. In so doing, He establishes two important principles that are crucial to “**Winning The War Over Worry**”. The first principle might be stated as...]

I. HAVE FAITH IN GOD’S PROVIDENCE

A. JESUS TELLS US NOT TO WORRY...

1. The word in the original means “**distracted**”
2. I.e., don't let **anxiety** about food and clothing distract you from more important things in life (like Martha did - **Lk 10:38-42**)

B. JESUS MAKES FOUR ARGUMENTS WHY WE SHOULDN'T WORRY...

1. Is not life and body more important than food and clothing? - **Mt 6:25**
 - a. This is an argument from the greater to the lesser (similar to **Ro 8:32**)
 - b. Life and body are certainly more important than food and clothing
 - c. Who provides our lives and our bodies? God!
 - a. If He is powerful enough to create life...
 - b. Isn't He also able to provide food & clothing to sustain that life?
 - d. “He who has displayed so great goodness as to form the body, and breathe into it the breathe of life, will surely follow up the blessing, and confer the smaller favor of providing that the body be clothed, and that life preserved.” (**Barnes**)
2. Look at the birds of the air, are you not more valuable than they? - **Mt 6:26**
 - a. The birds are an example of God's ability to provide
 - 1) Through His providential workings in nature, God provides for their needs
 - 2) This does not mean they do not work for their needs (indeed, they are often very busy, gathering food, preparing nests, caring for their young)
 - 3) But they are not guilty of overdoing a good thing (as the rich fool was in the parable)

of **Lk 12:16-21**)

- b. We are certainly more valuable to God than birds!
 - 1) This is an argument from the lesser to the greater (cf. **vs. 25**)
 - a) If God through His providence provides for their needs, will He not for you?
 - b) A similar argument is found in **Mt 10:29-31**
 - 2) How are you more valuable than birds?
 - a) You were created in the image of God!
 - b) You were redeemed by the blood of His Son!
 - c. Why, then, let concern over physical needs distract you from what is really important in life?
3. Can you grow simply by worrying? - **Mt 6:27**
- a. This argument illustrates the helplessness of man
 - 1) There are many things in this life which we cannot affect by “worrying”
 - 2) For example, worrying will not make our bodies grow any taller
 - b. The implication of this argument seems to be:
 - 1) Worrying about food and clothing cannot guarantee you will have them tomorrow
 - 2) As victims of Hurricane Hugo, the Great Quake of '89 and Hurricane Andrew have come to realize
4. Consider the lilies, won't God provide for you also? - **Mt 6:28-30**
- a. Another example of God's ability and willingness to provide
 - 1) Like the argument in **vs. 26** (the “birds of the air”)
 - 2) It is another argument from the lesser to the greater
 - b. Look at how they grow...
 - 1) Without any “toil” whatever on their part, nor any “care” bestowed on them by any human agency
 - 2) Yet their glory surpasses Solomon in all his glory! How?
 - a) Through God's providential care!
 - b) By so ordering the affairs of this life to assure that they accomplish what they were designed to accomplish!
 - c. Will God not much more clothe you?
 - 1) If God is able to so clothe the grass of the field...
 - 2) Is He not **able** and **willing** to do so for you?
 - a) You who are created in the image of God?
 - b) You who are designed to spend eternity with God?

C. IF WE WORRY, WE ARE OF LITTLE FAITH...

1. If we worry about food and clothing, then we are “little faith” - **Mt 6:30**
2. We have “little faith” in God's...
 - a. Promise to care for us!
 - b. Power to deliver that promise!

D. JESUS' SUMMARY CONCERNING GOD'S PROVIDENCE...

1. Don't worry about food and clothing - **Mt 6:31**
2. People without God (e.g., the Gentiles) naturally worry about these things - **Mt 6:32**
3. But we have God as our Heavenly Father, and He knows that we need such things!

[So we need to develop faith in God's providence, both in His ability and willingness to provide for His children. But the promise of His providence is conditioned upon our willingness to...]

II. MAKE GOD'S WILL YOUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY

A. SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD...

1. This is the second key to **“Winning The War Over Worry”**
2. We must make the will of God the number one priority in your life - **Mt 6:33**
3. We do this by:
 - a. Serving God instead of “mammon”
 - b. Letting the “lamp” of our body be a “good eye” (i.e., focused clearly on that which is good, true, and righteous)
 - c. Laying up treasure in heaven (by using earthly treasure to help others - **Mt 19:21; Lk 12:33-34; 1 Ti 6:17-19**)
4. Do this, and God will provide for your physical needs
 - a. For He is certainly “able”
 - b. And He is certainly “willing”

B. DON'T WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW...

1. Today has enough trouble with which to concern yourself - **Mt 6:34**
 - a. We are not capable of handling tomorrow's worries
 - 1) We have no control over the future
 - 2) And worrying about the future only distracts us from the duties of the present
 - b. Today's problems are all we are capable of handling without becoming distracted
2. Let tomorrow take care of itself
 - a. By trusting in God!
 - b. By doing God's will today!
3. Let your undivided attention be given to seeking God's rule in your life...
 - a. Make His kingdom the number one priority in your life
 - b. Concern yourself with His righteousness, not your riches

CONCLUSION

1. The motto of many is “Don't worry, be happy!”; but Jesus qualifies that motto by saying **“Don't worry, seek God's will first, and you will be happy!”**
2. If we take Jesus to heart, then our lives will be like homes built on a rock (cf. **Mt 7:24-25**)...
 - a. No matter what “storms” of life may come our way...
 - b. ...our treasure is in heaven and our Father will provide for us during our earthly sojourn!
3. If we don't heed Jesus' teachings, if we allow ourselves to serve perishable “mammon”...
 - a. Then we must go through life on earth without God's help!
 - b. And we have no hope of eternity with God when we die!

To Judge Or Not To Judge

Matthew 7:1-6

INTRODUCTION

1. A favorite saying of many people is “**Judge not, that you be not judged**”...
 - a. Frequently quoted whenever someone is pointing out the sins or faults of another
 - b. The impression is that we should never make moral judgments in what we see in others
2. Is that true? Is that what Jesus meant when He said this?
 - a. Are we never to make moral judgments about the right or wrong in other?
 - b. If we see wrong in others, can we never point it out?
3. I am persuaded that Jesus’ statement is often misused, that Jesus taught...
 - a. There are times when we must judge
 - b. There are times when it is appropriate to point out the faults in others

[“**To Judge Or Not To Judge**”, that is the question before us. The proper answer comes from a closer look at Jesus’ words in **Mt 7:1-6**. First note how His words are frequently misused...]

I. HIS WORDS OFTEN USED TO FORBID ALL MANNER OF JUDGMENT

A. SUCH AS ADVERSE OR UNFAVORABLE CRITICISM...

1. Like pointing out a fault in someone else
2. Even if it be truly “constructive” criticism

B. SUCH AS THE EXERCISE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE...

1. Exercising discipline of any sort does require “judging” others as to their moral or spiritual condition
2. Since such “judgment” is involved, some feel **vs. 1-2** rule out any sort of church discipline

C. SUCH AS EXPOSING THOSE WHO TEACH ERROR...

1. Admittedly, judgment is required to consider whether someone is teaching error
2. Therefore, some people, in light of **vs. 1-2**, believe that we cannot speak out against those who teach error

[Is that what Jesus means? Must we remain silent when we see people overtaken in a fault, bringing reproach upon the name of Christ, or blatantly teaching error? Let me suggest that...]

II. JESUS DID NOT RULE OUT ALL FORMS OF JUDGING

A. NOTE THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT...

1. Which reveals that in some cases proper judgment must be made
2. **Mt 7:6** implies that judgment is to be made as to who are “dogs” and who are “hogs”
 - a. Otherwise, how can we know when not to give that which is holy to “dogs”?
 - b. Or how can we know when not to cast our pearls before “swine”?
3. **Mt 7:15-20** implies that we must make judgments in determining who is a false teacher (“by

their fruits you will know them”)

B. CONSIDER THE REMOTE CONTEXT...

1. Which speak of times when judgment must be made!
2. Elsewhere, Jesus taught people to “judge with righteous judgment” - **Jn 7:24**
2. Christians have a responsibility to “judge those who are inside” the local church - **1 Co 5: 9-13**
3. We are taught by the apostle of love (John) to “test the spirits” (which making judgments) - **1 Jn 4:1**

[There is no contradiction here, for as we continue with our text, we notice that...]

III. JESUS DEFINED WHAT KIND OF JUDGING HE CONDEMNS

A. JUDGING WHEN BLIND TO ONE’S OWN FAULTS...

1. Read carefully **Mt 7:3-5**
2. Jesus is saying “that is it wrong for anyone to concentrate his attention on the speck in his brother's eye, and while thus occupied, to ignore the beam in his own eye” (**Hendriksen**)
3. Just Paul taught the necessity of proper “introspection” when helping others - **Ga 6:1**

B. JUDGING WITHOUT MERCY AND LOVE...

1. “The Lord is here condemning the spirit of censoriousness, judging harshly, self-righteously, without mercy, without love, as also the parallel passage (**Lk 6:36-37**) clearly indicates.” (**Hendriksen**)
2. James warned against making judgments without mercy - **Ja 2:13**
 - a. If we make judgments without showing mercy, then no mercy will be shown when we are judged!
 - b. Just as Jesus said in **verse 2...**
 - 1) “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged”
 - 2) “With the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you”

[The implication is not we should never judge, but when we do judge, remember that we shall be judged by the same standards we use! Let mercy and love temper our judgments. Finally...]

IV. JESUS IMPLIES THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE MUST JUDGE!

A. AFTER WE HAVE CORRECTED OUR OWN FAULTS...

1. First, we must remove the “beam” from our own eye - **Mt 7:5**
2. When we have done so, we are able to see, discern (judge), and be of help to others who are overtaken in their faults
3. Indeed, “the law of Christ” requires us to! - cf. **Ga 6:1-2**

B. BETWEEN THOSE “WORTHY” AND “HOGS & DOGS”...

1. Note carefully Jesus’ words in **Mt 7:6**
 - a. Some are not worthy of that which “holy”
 - b. Some are like “dogs” and “swine”
 - Determining who is which requires judgment upon our part!
2. With those who are receptive, we are to be longsuffering in trying to help them come out of their error - cf. **2 Ti 2:24-26**

3. But for those who are not, we are not to waste what is good and holy on them!
 - a. Cf. the instructions of Jesus to His disciples - **Mt 10:12-15**
 - b. Cf. the example of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch of Pisidia - **Ac 13:42-46**

CONCLUSION

1. The kind of judging forbidden by Jesus is that which **Lenski** calls “self-righteous, hypocritical judging which is false and calls down God's judgment on itself.”
2. This is the kind of judging that was also condemned by James when he wrote:

“Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?”

(Ja 4:11-12)

3. May God help us to refrain from such judging...
 - a. To be more apt to remove the “beams” from our own eyes
 - b. To then be more useful in helping others with their problems

But to say we should never judge, is to abuse what Jesus teaches, not only in this passage but elsewhere as well!

Speaking of judging, are you preparing yourself for the day in which you will be judged by the Lord?
- cf. **Jn 12:48; 2 Co 5:10**

The Virtue Of Perseverance

Matthew 7:7-11

INTRODUCTION

1. Why do some people...
 - a. Succeed in having their prayers answered?
 - b. Have a greater understanding of the Bible?
 - c. Reach more souls for Christ?
 - Is it skill, genius, or luck?
2. The answer is suggested by **Calvin Coolidge**: “Press on! Nothing in the world can take the place of perseverance. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts.”
3. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus talked about the virtue of perseverance...
 - a. Especially in its relevance to prayer
 - b. Giving us motivation to persevere in our service to God

[Our text is **Mt 7:7-11**, in which we find Jesus teaching about...]

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF PERSEVERANCE (7-8)

A. PERSEVERANCE IS IMPLIED IN THESE VERSES...

1. By the tense of the Greek
 - a. It is the present tense, which most often stresses “continuous action”
 - b. Literally, then, Jesus is saying:
 - 1) “keep on asking,” and it will be given to you
 - 2) “keep on seeking,” and you will find
 - 3) “keep on knocking,” and it will be opened to you
2. By the progression of the terms themselves
 - a. “asking” is one level of inquiry
 - b. “seeking” suggests a step up, as one goes about to find what they ask
 - c. “knocking” is another step up, as one persists in finding that which they seek

B. PERSEVERANCE IS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT...

1. To the matter of **prayer**
 - a. As later implied in **Mt 7:11**
 - b. Jesus often stressed the importance of persistence in prayer
 - 1) In the parable of “The Persistent Friend” - **Lk 11:5-8**
 - 2) In the parable of “The Persistent Widow” - **Lk 18:1-8**
2. To the matter of **Bible study**
 - a. Many people give up too soon in their Bible studies
 - b. But those who persevere in their studies are the ones who benefit from the blessings God's Word provides - cf. **Psa 1:1-3; 119:97-104**
3. To the matter of **evangelism**

- a. Many do not bear fruit because they give up too soon
- b. But we reap what we sow; the more persistent we are in sowing, the more we will eventually reap

[If we desire success in any venture, but especially in prayer, Bible study, and evangelism, then we must adopt “**The Virtue Of Perseverance.**” To encourage us to do so, Jesus goes on to provide...]

II. A MOTIVE FOR PERSEVERANCE (9-11)

A. GOD DELIGHTS TO GIVE GOOD THINGS TO HIS CHILDREN...

1. To illustrate, Jesus gives a simple argument (from the lesser to the greater)
 - a. I.e., men give good gifts to their children who ask
 - b. How much more so, will our Father in heaven!
2. Jesus stressed this Fatherly attribute of God in His sermon
 - a. In regards to our physical necessities - **Mt 6:31-32**
 - b. And now in regards to things that are good for us - **Mt 7:11**

B. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN REGARDS TO PRAYER...

1. As Jesus promised to His disciples in **Jn 15:7**
 - a. Conditioned upon our abiding in Him
 - b. Conditioned upon His words abiding in us
2. As the apostle John wrote in **1 Jn 5:14-15**
 - a. Conditioned upon our asking according to His will
 - b. Which assumes we know His will for us (i.e., His word is abiding in us)
3. And as James wrote in **Ja 4:3**
 - a. Presuming we are not asking for personal and selfish gain
 - b. But many do not enjoy God’s favor, simply because they do not ask!

CONCLUSION

1. To persevere, then, is a noble virtue, especially in regards to prayer...
 - a. We have a Father in heaven who is not untouched by the persistent pleas of His children
 - b. Providing we do not ask amiss, persistent prayers will not go unanswered!
2. If we desire to receive, find, and have doors opened to us, then let us...
 - a. Keep on asking
 - b. Keep on seeking
 - c. Keep on knocking-- Not only in regards to prayer, but in all ventures worthy of Christians (e.g., Bible study, evangelism)!

Have you asked, sought, or knocked today...?

The Golden Rule

Matthew 7:12

INTRODUCTION

1. Have you ever found yourself in a situation...
 - a. Faced with the need to make a decision on the spur of the moment?
 - b. Wondering what is the right way to act?
 - c. Unable to recall whether the Bible specifically addresses the moral dilemma in which you find yourself?
2. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus provided a helpful tool in such a situation...
 - a. A quick and easy way to know what to do
 - b. Something that is easy to remember
3. It is found in **Mt 7:12**, and is commonly called “**The Golden Rule**”...

“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Mt 7:12)

[But what is “**The Golden Rule**”? Was Jesus teaching anything new or original by what He stated? Well, in a way it was something new...]

I. THE “GOLDEN” RULE VS. THE “SILVER” RULES

A. MANY HAVE TAUGHT THAT WHICH IS SIMILAR...

1. The **Hindu** religion taught: “This is the sum of duty: do naught to others which if done to thee would cause thee pain.” - **The Mahabharata**
2. The **Buddhist** religion taught: “Hurt not others with that which pains yourself.” - **Udana-Varga**
3. The **Jewish** traditions taught: “What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow men. That is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary.” - **The Talmud**
4. The **Muslim** religion taught: “No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.” - **Hadith**
5. The **Baha’i faith** teaches: “He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfill.” - **The Book of Certitude**
6. Some other sources:
 - a. “Do not that to thy neighbor that thou wouldst not suffer from him”. - **Pittacus of Lesbos** (650-570 BC)
 - b. “What you do not want others to do to you, do not do to others”. - **Confucius** (551-479 BC)
 - c. “Do not do unto others what angers you if done to you by others.” - **Isocrates** (436-338 BC)
 - d. “Tzu-kung asked, ‘Is there a single word which can be a guide to conduct throughout one’s life?’ The Master said, ‘It is perhaps the word “shu”. Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire” - **Analects, 15.24**
 - e. “Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters.” **Seneca** (4 BC-AD 65)

B. JESUS' "RULE" WAS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT...

1. Jesus requires you to do something favorably to others, while the others only prohibit you from doing something unfavorably to others!
 - a. **Jesus:** Do unto others what you want them to do to you
 - b. **Others:** Don't do to others what you don't want done to you
2. Note the difference...
 - a. With the others, all that is required is that you don't harm other people
 - b. With Jesus, what is required is that you show kindness to others
3. Jesus' rule is truly the "**Golden**" rule
 - a. The others are "**Silver**" rules
 - b. Of value, yes, but not as much as "gold"
4. The only ones who came close to teaching exactly what Jesus taught was:
 - a. That found in Hadith, the traditions of Islam; but then, much of Islam is based upon what Jesus taught 600 years before Mohammed
 - b. That stated by Seneca, who lived about the same time as Christ (I wonder if he had been influenced by the teachings of Christ?)

[What Jesus taught was something new compared to what uninspired teachers had taught prior. But in another sense it was nothing new; rather, in a simple and easy to remember statement, Jesus gives us...]

II. A GUIDELINE FOR RIGHTEOUS CONDUCT TOWARDS OTHERS

A. IN HARMONY WITH THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS...

1. As we have seen in the rest of Jesus' teachings (cf. **Mt 5:20-48**)
 - a. Jesus taught a standard of righteousness that contrasted with that of the scribes and Pharisees
 - b. But it was in harmony with what the Law actually revealed
2. This one "rule" summarizes what the Law and the Prophets were all about
3. Just as the commandment "Love your neighbor as yourself" summed up the Law according to Paul - **Ro 13:8-10**

B. A SORT OF "POCKET KNIFE" OR "CARPENTER'S RULE"...

1. That is, something that is always ready to be used
2. For example, even in an emergency, when there is no time to consult a friend, teacher, or book for advice, "the golden rule" can be guide for proper conduct
3. Treat others as you would be treated, and it is unlikely you will ever do the wrong thing

III. SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW TO APPLY THIS RULE

A. IN TEACHING THE LOST...

1. Imagine what it must be like to be told you are wrong, or in sin
2. Wouldn't you want to be told so in a loving and patient spirit?
3. As you would have others try to persuade you to change religiously, so treat those you seek to convert - cf. **2 Ti 2:24-26; Ep 4:15**

B. IN CORRECTING ONE ANOTHER...

1. No one likes to have their mistakes, errors, etc., pointed out
2. When necessary, wouldn't we prefer to be approached with a meek and patient spirit?

3. As you would have others offer you constructive criticism, so give it to them - cf. **Ga 6:1-2**

C. IN TREATING OUR FAMILY, NEIGHBORS, ENEMIES...

1. Everyone likes to have loving families, good neighbors, and no enemies
2. Applying the golden rule will not only transform ourselves, but may also transform those around us!
 - a. Sibling rivalry would cease
 - b. Neighborly squabbles would be nonexistent
 - c. Enemies would become friends
3. Don't limit the application of the Golden Rule to religious matters!

CONCLUSION

1. "The Golden Rule would reconcile capital and labor, all political contention and uproar, all selfishness and greed." **Joseph Parker** (1830-1902)
 - a. Such would be the impact on our society if more followed Jesus' words
 - b. But let's start close to home, and let the Golden Rule transform our own lives and those closest to us!
2. "We have committed the Golden Rule to memory; let us now commit it to life." **Edwin Markham** (1852-1940)
 - a. This reflects what is true with most people; they know the rule, but don't live by it
 - b. If Jesus is truly our Lord, then His "golden rule" will govern our life!

Are You On The Right Way?

Matthew 7:13-14

INTRODUCTION

1. Each one of us is on a spiritual journey as we travel through life...
 - a. Whether religious or not, we travel a spiritual path
 - b. Every day we make choices that affects the direction in which we are headed
2. Many people think that the paths we can travel are many...
 - a. In one sense that may be true; there is the all kinds of religions
 - b. But in another sense there is really only two paths or ways
3. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus spoke of these two ways - **Mt 7:13-14**
 - a. Each with their own beginning, each with their own end
 - b. One way is heavily populated, the other is traveled by few
4. Where are you in your spiritual sojourn?
 - a. Are you on the right way?
 - b. Are you heading in the right direction?

[To answer such questions, let's look closely at what Jesus said. Note first that...]

I. THERE ARE TWO GATES

A. THE WIDE GATE...

1. "for wide is the gate..." - **Mt 7:13**
2. This "gate" represents the beginning to the "way" that leads to destruction
3. It is described as "wide"; evidently it is a gate which:
 - a. Allows many to enter with no sacrifice on their part
 - 1) It does not require giving up anything
 - 2) One is allowed to bring along whatever "baggage" they desire
 - a) E.g., materialism
 - b) E.g., prejudice, hatred, an unforgiving spirit
 - c) E.g., believe whatever one wants to believe
 - b. Is therefore chosen by most people
 - 1) For there are no restrictions concerning belief and behavior
 - 2) It also opens the way to "the path of least resistance"

B. THE NARROW GATE...

1. "Enter by the narrow gate.." - **Mt 7:13**
2. This "gate" represents the beginning, or starting point, to the "way" that leads to life
3. Why is it "narrow"? Because it is a gate which:
 - a. Requires self-denial and obedience - cf. **Mt 16:24**
 - b. Has no room for...
 - 1) A consuming desire for earthly goods - **Mt 6:19-20**
 - 2) An unforgiving spirit - **Mt 6:14-15**

- 3) Self-righteousness - **Mt 6:1**
- As Jesus has already stressed in His sermon on the mount

[These two “gates” are only the starting points. Let’s now take a closer look at the fact that...]

II. THERE ARE TWO WAYS

A. THE BROAD WAY...

1. “...broad is the way” - **Mt 7:13**
2. The way that leads to destruction is broad because it allows:
 - a. Any behavior one desires
 - b. No need for reformation or changes in one’s “lifestyle”
3. Many people love this path
 - a. They think they are “free”
 - b. They believe they are “open-minded”
 - c. They view themselves as “tolerant” of others in this same way

B. THE CONSTRICTED WAY...

1. “...difficult is the way” - **Mt 7:14** (NKJV)
 - a. “...narrow the road” (NIV)
 - b. “the way is narrow” (NASB)
 - c. “narrow is the way” (KJV)
 -- The picture is one of a narrow and difficult path between two cliffs
2. The way that leads to life is “difficult” because it requires:
 - a. A righteousness that exceeds that of many religious people - **Mt 5:20**
 - b. A change in our behavior - cf. **Mt 5:21-7:12**
3. Because of its difficulty, many choose not to travel its path
 - a. They think it too “confining”
 - b. They think it is too “narrow-minded”

[As Jesus describes the two gates and the two ways, He also reminds us that...]

III. THERE ARE TWO GROUPS

A. THE MANY...

1. “There are many who go in by it” - **Mt 7:13**
2. We have seen reasons why this is so:
 - a. The entrance is wide: “Come as you are! No changes necessary!”
 - b. The way is broad: “Make your own rules! Believe what you want! Do what you want!”
3. This is the way people travel by default; unless they are actively seeking the narrow path, this is the one they will travel

B. THE FEW...

1. “there are few who find it” - **Mt 7:14**
2. As proven true so often in the past, only few will be saved
 - a. E.g., the millions lost in the flood vs. the eight saved on the ark
 - b. E.g., the hundreds of thousands lost in the wilderness vs. the two who entered the promised land
 -- So Jesus warned on another occasion - **Lk 13:23-24**

3. That it must be “found” suggests effort must extended
 - a. As Jesus said in **Lk 13:24**: “Strive to enter through the narrow gate...”
 - b. Even then not all will be saved: “...for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”
 - Not just effort, but the right kind of effort - cf. **Mt 5:6; 6:33**

[Finally, we note that Jesus tells us that...]

IV. THERE ARE TWO DESTINATIONS

A. DESTRUCTION...

1. “...broad is the way that leads to destruction” - **Mt 7:13**
2. Paul wrote of the “everlasting destruction” that is to come - **2 Th 1:7-9**
 - a. Upon those who know not God
 - b. Upon those who obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ
3. John described it as “a lake of fire” - **Re 20:15; 21:8**
 - A most sobering thought are these words of Jesus: “...there are many who go in by it.” - **Mt 7:13**

B. LIFE...

1. “...difficult is the way which leads to life” - **Mt 7:14**
2. This “life” is the “everlasting life” received at the judgment - **Mt 25:46**
3. It is the “gift of God”, given at the end - **Ro 6:22-23**
 - a. To those who have been set free from sin - cf. **Ro 6:3-7**
 - b. To those who became slaves of God and of righteousness - cf. **Ro 6:17-18**
 - c. To those who bore the fruit of holiness - cf. **Ro 6:20-22**
 - Another sobering thought are these words about the way that leads to this life: “...there are few who find it.” - **Mt 7:14**

CONCLUSION

1. So we have seen that Jesus describes...
 - a. Two gates
 - b. Two ways
 - c. Two groups
 - d. Two destinations
2. Are there many roads that lead to heaven...?
 - a. Many people like to think so
 - b. That all religions lead to heaven
 - c. That it really doesn’t matter what you believe or do, as long as you are sincere
3. But according to Jesus...
 - a. There are only two roads (ways)
 - b. One leads to life, i.e., heaven
 - c. The other road, filled with many people with many different beliefs, leads to destruction!
4. Are you on the right way, the only way, that leads to life?
 - a. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through

Me.” - **Jn 14:6**

- b. The way He provides is a narrow one, for He requires people to keep His commandments
- **Mt 28:19-20**

Will you be among the few, or the many? Let Jesus lead you along the narrow way that leads to eternal life!

The Difficult Way To Life

Matthew 7:14

INTRODUCTION

1. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus spoke of two ways...
 - a. The way to destruction - **Mt 7:13**
 - b. The way to life - **Mt 7:14**
2. In describing these two ways, He pointed out the contrasts...
 - a. The way to destruction is broad, and many chose to follow it - **Mt 7:13**
 - b. The way to life is difficult, and there are few who find it - **Mt 7:14**

[If we desired to be saved, to experience eternal life, there will be hardship along the way. As we use this lesson to contemplate “**The Difficult Way To Life**”, we note first that...]

I. WE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED

A. WE HAVE BEEN WARNED...

1. By Jesus in our text and elsewhere - **Mt 7:14; Jn 15:18-20; 16:33**
2. By Paul to his fellow disciples - **Ac 14:22; 2 Ti 3:12**
3. By Peter in his epistle - **1 Pe 4:12**
- **Jesus and His apostles have given full disclosure that the way to life is difficult**

B. WE HAVE MANY ENEMIES...

1. Satan himself, who seeks to devour - **1 Pe 5:8-9**
2. People who think us ‘strange’, who may ridicule and ostracize us - **1 Pe 4:3-4**
3. The lust of the flesh, with its bad habits - **1 Pe 2:11**
- **Without and within, there are forces at work making the way to life difficult**

[Forewarned, what should our attitude be? Though the way to life is difficult...]

II. WE SHOULD NOT BE RESENTFUL

A. WE ARE TOLD TO REJOICE...

1. By Jesus in His sermons - **Mt 5:10-12; Lk 6:22-23**
2. By James in his epistle - **Ja 1:2**
3. As did the apostles, when persecuted - **Ac 5:41**
- **Jesus and His apostles say that we should rejoice. Why?**

B. BECAUSE IT MAKES US STRONGER...

1. Which is why Paul gloried in his tribulations - **Ro 5:3-4; 2 Co 12:10**
2. Which is why James told us to rejoice in our trials - **Ja 1:2-4**
3. “In the difficult are the friendly forces, the hands that work on us.” - **Rainer Maria Rilke**
- **Can we begin to see why God would allow the way to life to be so difficult?**

[So rejoice, not resent, when trials and tribulations befall us on the way to life. What may appear to be

stumbling blocks may in fact be stepping stones to victory. Especially as we consider why...]

III. WE SHOULD NOT BE DEFEATED

A. WE HAVE GOD ON OUR SIDE...

1. He will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability to endure - **1 Co 10:13a**
 2. He will provide a way of escape, enabling us to endure - **1 Co 10:13b**
 3. This includes strength to stand strong
 - a. His Spirit to empower the inner man - **Ep 3:16; cf. Ro 15:13**
 - b. His armor to protect, and fight the good fight - **Ep 6:10-13**
- **Through God's providence and provision, we have the ability to be victorious!**

B. WE HAVE JESUS TO INSPIRE US...

1. He provided an example of suffering, for us to follow - **1 Pe 2:21**
 2. We should look to Him, as we seek to endure - **He 12:1-4**
 3. Even as Stephen did, emulating His forgiving spirit - **Ac 7:54-60; cf. Lk 23:34**
- **Through Jesus' example, we have the inspiration and motivation to succeed!**

CONCLUSION

1. This is not to say we will never misstep along the way to life...
 - a. As Christians we sin - **1 Jn 1:8,10**
 - b. When we stumble, we have mercy and forgiveness - **1 Jn 1:7,9**
2. So as we travel on the way to life, finding it at times to be difficult...
 - a. Let's not be **surprised**
 - b. Let's not be **resentful**
 - c. Let's not be **defeated**

But as the writer to the Hebrews penned in his epistle...

“Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.”

“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:”

“Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;”

- Heb 12:12-15

And as Paul confessed in his epistle...

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” - Ph 4:13

Note: The idea and main points for this study came from a daily devotional written my cousin and brother in the Lord, Gary Henry. Visit his website at **WordPoints.com** to find lots of good material!

Watch Out For Wolves!

Matthew 7:15-20

INTRODUCTION

1. Many people like to think that you can trust religious leaders...
 - a. Ministers normally rank high in polls concerning people you can trust
 - b. People will often accept whatever a preacher, priest, or rabbi says as the truth
2. Yet Jesus told His disciples to beware of false prophets - **Mt 7:15-20**
 - a. They may appear like sheep, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves
 - b. We need to be able to identify them, knowing what to look for
3. Are you concerned about false prophets today? You should be!
 - a. The great diversity of teaching suggests that many are being misled
 - b. We need to be reminded of the danger, and know how to spot any “wolves” that might come our way!

[With the words of our Savior in **Mt 7:15-20** fresh on our mind, I wish to use this opportunity to remind us to “**Watch Out For Wolves!**” Let me first reemphasize the point that...]

I. THERE WILL BE FALSE PROPHETS

A. AS PAUL WARNED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS...

1. To the Ephesian elders - **Ac 20:28-31**
 - a. Telling them to take heed
 - b. For even from among themselves would men arise, misleading people
2. To the church at Corinth - **2 Co 11:13-15**
 - a. Referring to false teachers present even then
 - b. Appearing as ministers of righteousness, even as Satan appears as an angel of light
3. To the young preacher Timothy - **1 Ti 4:1-3; 2 Ti 3:1-9**
 - a. Warning of the apostasy that would come
 - b. Describing the character and tactics of those who would mislead others

B. AS DID OTHER NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS...

1. Peter, in telling of the rise of false teachers - **2 Pe 2:1-3**
2. John, in calling for people to “test the spirits” - **1 Jn 4:1**
3. Jude, in writing of some who had already come - **Ju 3-4**

[With so many warnings, this is not a subject to take lightly! But how can we spot such “wolves” when they appear so disarming (like sheep)? Thanks to Jesus and the Word of God...]

II. WE CAN IDENTIFY FALSE PROPHETS

A. BY EXAMINING THE FRUIT OF THEIR LIFE...

1. We can know them by their “fruit” - **Mt 7:16-20**
 - a. What is truly in their heart will eventually come out

- b. For from the heart proceeds any sin that may be there - cf. **Mk 7:21-23**
- 2. Thus false teachers and false prophets are often betrayed...
 - a. By their greediness (e.g., as manifested by their lavish lifestyles)
 - b. By their immorality (e.g., as manifested by adulterous relationships)
 - c. By their lust for power (e.g., as manifested by religious empires)
- Given time, the true character of false prophets will be exposed by the fruit of their life!

B. BY EXAMINING THE FRUIT OF THEIR TEACHING...

- 1. Taking notice of their **methods**
 - a. Working secretly - cf. **2 Pe 2:1**
 - 1) Their ministries (especially finances) will be shrouded in secrecy
 - 2) Rather than being open to one and all - cf. **2 Co 8:20-21**
 - b. Appealing to covetousness - cf. **2 Pe 2:3**
 - 1) They draw people with an appeal to what people often covet (such as health and wealth)
 - 2) Rather than preparing people for what Christians can expect - cf. **Ac 14:23; 2 Ti 3:12**
 - c. Using deceptive words - cf. **2 Ti 3:13; 2 Pe 2:3**
 - 1) Twisting the scriptures to support their message (as Satan did in tempting Jesus)
 - 2) Rather handling the word of God rightly - cf. **2 Ti 2:14-16**
- 2. Taking notice of their **doctrine**
 - a. How they twist and pervert the scriptures - cf. **Ga 1:8-9**
 - 1) Their gospel may start out right, but becomes twisted along the way
 - 2) Their teaching often expressed in the terms of man, not Scripture
 - b. How they teach that which is clearly contrary to the scriptures - cf. **Deu 13:1-4**
 - 1) Even if they appear able to perform signs and wonders!
 - 2) The final test is how their teaching compares to the word of God and that of His apostles - cf. **1 Jn 4:1,6**

CONCLUSION

- 1. It is not necessary to judge the hearts of those who claim to speak for God...
 - a. We need only to be “fruit-inspectors”
 - b. The fruit of their life and teaching will become apparent soon enough
 - This is how we can **“Watch Out For Wolves!”**
- 2. Of course, this presumes that our knowledge of God’s word is sufficient...
 - a. To know what to look for in the life of a false prophet
 - b. To know what to listen for in the teaching of a false prophet
 - Otherwise we will be no different than Israel, of whom God said: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” - **Hos 4:6**

Are you equipped to identify a wolf in sheep’s clothing if you saw one?

Who Will Enter The Kingdom Of Heaven?

Matthew 7:21-23

INTRODUCTION

1. Most people believe they will go to heaven when they die...
 - a. Their hope is fostered by the comforting words of many preachers, priests, and rabbis
 - b. Their hope is based upon the idea that heaven is for all believers, or for those whose good works outweigh the bad
2. But are such hopes well-founded?
 - a. Will most people go to heaven when they die?
 - b. Is salvation based upon good works? Is it based upon faith only?
3. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus gave some ominous warnings...
 - a. Few, not many, would be saved - **Mt 7:13-14**
 - b. Many religious people, including some believers in Jesus, will learn that they too will be lost! - **Mt 7:21-23**
4. With **Mt 7:21-23** as the spring board for our study, I wish to address the question: **“Who will enter the kingdom of heaven?”**

[Before considering this question, perhaps this is good opportunity to answer another one first...]

I. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

A. THE TERM “KINGDOM OF HEAVEN”...

1. Is synonymous with the **“kingdom of God”** - cf. **Mt 4:17** with **Mk 1:14-15**
2. Refers to God’s kingship, or rule, from heaven
- The kingdom of heaven is focused in the Person of Jesus Christ, and is especially manifested where He rules in the hearts of men - **Lk 17:20-21**

B. IN BRIEF, THE “KINGDOM OF HEAVEN”...

1. Is **spiritual** in nature - **Jn 18:36; Ro 14:17**
2. It began when all authority (rule) was given to Jesus - **Mt 28:18; Ac 2:36; Ep 1:20-23**
3. **Today**, it includes **the Lord’s church** on earth (for those who submit to the Will of Christ are added to the kingdom) - **Co 1:13; Re 1:9**
4. In the **future**, it will involve the **new heavens and new earth**, where we will be with God and Jesus for eternity! - **Mt 13:40-43; 2 Pe 3:10-13; Re 21:1-22:5**
- The kingdom of heaven was **inaugurated** on the Day of Pentecost, and will be **culminated** when Jesus returns to deliver it back to God - cf. **1 Co 15:23-28**

C. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN OUR TEXT...

1. Appears to have the **future** aspect of the kingdom in view
 - a. Note that Jesus says “in that day...” - **Mt 7:22**
 - b. An apparent reference to the day of judgment - cf. **2 Ti 1:12,18; 4:8**
2. Thus Jesus is talking about who will enter the kingdom in its future aspect

- a. Of which He spoke on other occasions - **Mt 25:31-34**
- b. Of which Peter wrote in **2 Pe 1:10-11**

[What a wonderful blessing, to have an abundant entrance into “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”! But this leads us back to our text (**Mt 7:21-23**), and to the main question of our study...]

II. WHO WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

A. NOT EVERYONE WHO PROFESSES JESUS...

1. “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven”
 2. There are some who teach that as long as one believes in Jesus, they will be saved
 - a. That salvation is by **faith only**
 - b. Even though the only time “faith only” is found in the Scriptures, it says: “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.” - **Ja 2:24**
 3. But there is such a thing as “an unsaved believer”...
 - a. The demons believe, but are not saved - **Ja 2:19**
 - b. There were some who believed in Jesus, but were not saved - **Jn 12:42,43**
 - c. Jesus described a true disciple as one who not only believed in Him, but did what He said - **Jn 8:30-32**
- Let no one think that just because they believe in Jesus, they have a free ticket into heaven!

B. NOT EVERYONE WHO DOES MANY GOOD WORKS...

1. “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not...’” - **Mt 7:22**
2. Here were people who not only believed in Jesus, but believed they had:
 - a. Prophesied in His name!
 - b. Cast out demons in His Name!
 - c. Done many wonders in His Name!

-- I.e., they thought they had been empowered to do such wonderful works!
3. Such good works certainly did not earn their way to heaven
 - a. Indeed, salvation is by grace, not meritorious works - cf. **Ti 3:3-7**
 - b. Good works had not saved Cornelius, he still needed to be told what to do to be saved - **Ac 10:1-5; 11:14**
4. Indeed, sometimes what we may think is a good work is without any authority...
 - a. Jesus condemns these as those “who practice lawlessness” - **Mt 7:23**
 - b. Literally, those who act without authority
 - 1) It was not that they did something condemned by Jesus
 - 2) It was that they did things for which they had no authority!

-- We might be very religious, and do many things in the name of Jesus, yet He might still say: “I never knew you; depart from Me...”

[Who then will be saved?]

C. THOSE WHO DO THE FATHER’S WILL...

1. As Jesus said, “...he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” - **Mt 7:21**
 - a. Here is the dividing line: those who DO the Father’s will!
 - b. As James would write later, it is the “doer of the work” who is blessed in what he does - cf. **Ja 1:22-25**
2. Is this legalism?

- a. No! Legalism is salvation by perfect law-keeping, believing that one earns salvation by the merit of what they have done
- b. Salvation by grace does not preclude the necessity of obedience
 - 1) We simply need to recognize that our obedience does not earn or merit salvation
 - 2) When all is said and done, we are still unworthy! - cf. **Lk 17:10**
3. The Father's will, while it offers salvation by grace, does require obedience!
 - a. Only those who obey from the heart will be delivered from sin - **Ro 6:17-18**
 - b. Christ is the author of salvation to all who obey Him - **He 5:9**
 - c. Christ will come in judgment against those who obey not the gospel - **2 Th 1:7-9**

CONCLUSION

1. Who will enter the kingdom of heaven...?
 - a. Not those who profess to believe, but do not obey
 - b. Not those who think they are doing many religious things, but without authority
 - c. Those who do the Father's will!
2. This is why we must take an earlier statement in Jesus' sermon so seriously...
 - a. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." - **Mt 6:33**
 - b. We must make the finding of God's will and rule the number one priority in our life!
3. What is the Father's will? It begins with...
 - a. Repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ - **Ac 20:21**
 - b. Confessing Jesus as Lord - **Ro 10:10**
 - c. Being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins - **Ac 2:38**
-- Followed by a life of faithful service to Christ, confessing our sins along the way - **Re 2:10; 1 Jn 1:9**

Are you doing the Father's will?

Building To Withstand The Storms

Matthew 7:24-27

INTRODUCTION

1. 1998 was quite a year for natural disasters in the state of Florida...
 - a. There were killer tornadoes, devastating fires, destructive hurricanes
 - b. Impacting the lives of many people
2. Such disasters proved to reveal much about contractors...
 - a. We learned that some builders were unscrupulous
 - b. Failing to build according to code, many homes and buildings were destroyed
3. Jesus made a parallel between storms and buildings at the end of His sermon - **Mt 7:24-27**
 - a. As He sought to encourage people to act upon His sayings
 - b. Contrasting the difference between those who were doers and not just listeners
4. In this lesson, I wish to address the following questions...
 - a. What do the “houses” of the wise and foolish builders represent?
 - b. What “storms” is Jesus talking about?
 - c. How can we “build” so as to be able to withstand the storms?

[Let's begin by identifying the “houses”; I suggest that...]

I. THE HOUSES REPRESENT OUR LIVES

A. EACH OF US IS BUILDING A “LIFE”...

1. A life that will eventually face the vicissitudes of life
2. A life that will respond to the many ups and downs that come our way

B. WE ARE BUILDING THESE “LIVES” UPON A FOUNDATION...

1. The foundation is whatever teaching, doctrine, or philosophy to which we subscribe
2. It may be a philosophy or doctrine adopted from others, or developed ourselves

[We cannot escape the fact that we are **builders**. The question is whether we will be wise or foolish builders. The tests that will determine are called **storms**...]

II. THE STORMS ARE THINGS WHICH THREATEN OUR WELL-BEING

A. THIS MAY INVOLVE LITERAL STORMS...

1. Such as tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, etc.
2. Which may take away all that we own, perhaps even our loved ones
3. How we respond to such tragedies will reveal the quality of our “building”
 - a. Will we be emotionally devastated?
 - b. Will we be able to stand strong, willing to continue on without despair?

B. IT MAY ALSO INVOLVE FIGURATIVE STORMS...

1. Such as illness, loss of loved ones, financial setbacks
2. Which may take away our health, family, possessions
3. Again, how we respond to such tragedies will reveal the quality of our “building”
 - a. Will we be emotionally devastated?
 - b. Will we be able to stand strong, willing to continue on without despair?

C. THEN THERE IS THE FINAL “STORM” OF LIFE...

1. That of death and the final day of Judgment - cf. **He 9:27; Ro 2:4-6**
2. Which will be the truest test of our “building” (i.e., character) - cf. **2 Co 5:10-11**
3. The Lord will describe the kind of “builder” (or servant) we have been
 - a. E.g., “Well done, good and faithful servant...” - **Mt 25:21**
 - b. E.g., “You wicked and lazy servant...” - **Mt 25:26**

[The longer we live, the more “storms” we are likely to face; and there is **the final “storm”** that none can escape! How can we be sure to build our lives so as to withstand the storms?]

III. OBEYING JESUS IS THE KEY TO WITHSTANDING THE STORMS

A. BEING A “HEARER” ONLY IS NOT SUFFICIENT...

1. Such is foolishness, building on a shaky foundation that will not stand the test of storms - **Mt 7:26-27**
2. As James wrote, one is deceiving only themselves - **Ja 1:22-24**
3. Like the unscrupulous contractor, the storm will reveal the truly quality of one’s character
4. As Moses said, “...your sin will find you out.” - **Num 32:23**

B. WE MUST “DO” WHAT JESUS SAYS...

1. Those who “do” what Jesus said will be those to withstand the storms - **Mt 7:24-25**
2. Because their lives (houses) are built upon the “rock” (a solid foundation)
3. As James went on to write, it is the doer who is blessed in what he does - **Ja 1:25**

C. HOW THE SAYINGS OF JESUS HELP US WITHSTAND THE STORMS...

1. His saying regarding where to lay up treasure - **Mt 6:19-21**
 - a. In which we are told to lay up treasure in heaven, not on earth
 - b. If we heed Him, our heart will not be distraught if earthly treasures are stolen or lost
2. His saying regarding what to seek first - **Mt 6:33**
 - a. Calling upon to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness
 - b. By heeding His words, we need not have anxiety for the future
3. Indeed, His sayings provide the basis for a solid foundation in which to build a life...
 - a. That will avoid being misled by false prophets - **Mt 7:15-20**
 - b. That will stay on the straight and narrow way that leads to life - **Mt 7:13-14**
 - c. That will fulfill the Law and the Prophets - **Mt 7:12**
 - d. That will receive what good gifts God desires to give His children - **Mt 7:7-11**
 - e. That will not be judged by some inconsistent standard - **Mt 7:1-6**
 - f. Where the necessities of life are provided for - **Mt 6:30-34**
 - g. Free from materialism and anxiety - **Mt 6:22-29**
 - h. With treasure that cannot rust or be stolen - **Mt 6:19-21**
 - i. With acts of righteousness that are well-pleasing to God - **Mt 6:1-18**
 - j. With righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees - **Mt 5:20-48**

CONCLUSION

1. Yes, this is a life that can truly withstand the storms...!
 - a. Whether it be the literal or figurative storms of every day life
 - b. Or the storm of the Day of Wrath and Judgment that is yet to come

2. What kind of foundation are you building your house (life) upon...?
 - a. Heed what Jesus is saying, and your life will be solid
 - b. Be listeners only, and your life will be as shaky as sand!

Just as Jesus is the Rock-solid foundation of the church (**1 Co 3:11; Ep 2:20; 1 Pe 2:4-6**), so let Him be the Rock-solid foundation of your life!

He Taught As One Having Authority

Matthew 7:28-29

INTRODUCTION

1. During His earthly ministry, Jesus astonished the people with His teaching...
 - a. He astonished them in His teaching at the synagogues - **Mk 1:21-22; 6:2**
 - b. They were astonished by His sermon on the mount - **Mt 7:28-29**
2. What impressed the people was that “He taught as one having authority...”
 - a. Unlike the scribes, who simply interpreted the Law
 - b. Jesus spoke as One had the right to make the law!
 - 1) E.g., “But I say to you...But I tell you...” - **Mt 5:22,28,32,34,39,44**
 - 2) E.g., “Take heed... You shall not be...Do not...” - **Mt 6:1,2,5,8,19,25**
3. The question might be raised, “Did Jesus have the authority to speak this way...?”
 - a. He may have taught with authority, but was it His to do so?
 - b. Should we, who read that which He taught, give heed to obey what He said?
4. At a time when many do not heed the words of Jesus...
 - a. Not only those in the world
 - b. But, sadly, even many who profess Him to be Lord
...the authority of Jesus needs to be recognized and followed by all, but especially by those who claim to be His disciples

[In this study, we shall review the authority that Jesus has, beginning with...]

I. THE INHERENT RIGHT OF JESUS' AUTHORITY

A. BY VIRTUE OF BEING THE CREATOR...

1. All things were made through Him - **Jn 1:1-3; He 1:2**
2. All things were made by Him and for Him - **Co 1:16**
- As **Creator**, Jesus has the authority to demand whatever He desires of His creation

B. BY VIRTUE OF BEING THE HEIR...

1. As prophesied, Jesus would be given all things - **Psa 2:8**
2. As the Son, Jesus has been appointed heir of all things - **He 1:2**
- As the **Heir**, Jesus has authority over that which has been given Him

C. BY VIRTUE OF BEING THE REDEEMER...

1. Jesus has redeemed us from our sins - **1 Pe 1:18-19**
2. This He has done with His own blood - **Ep 1:7; Ac 20:28**
- As our **Redeemer**, He certainly has authority over those who have been purchased by His blood!

[As Creator, Heir, and Redeemer, Jesus has both the inherent right and the earned right to speak with authority. Dare we living today not recognize such authority? Consider others who gave voice to...]

II. THE RECOGNITION OF JESUS' AUTHORITY

A. HE WAS WORSHIPPED BY ANGELS...

1. When He came into the world - **He 1:6**
2. As He sat on the throne of God - **Re 5:11-12**
- **Angels** deemed Him worthy to receive power (authority)

B. HE WAS RECOGNIZED BY DEMONS...

1. They acknowledged He had the authority to destroy them - **Mk 1:23-24**
2. They obeyed His rebuke - **Mk 1:25-26**
- **Demons**, even when possessing power of their own, could not resist His authority

C. HE WAS PRAISED BY THE REDEEMED...

1. Those before the throne and the Lamb ascribed salvation to God and the Lamb - **Re 7:9-10**
2. Even as John praised Him for having authority over the kings of the earth - **Re 1:5**
- If we are among the **redeemed**, should we not also recognize His authority?

[Finally, let's note...]

III. THE EXTENT OF JESUS' AUTHORITY

A. HE HAS ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH...

1. As announced by Him prior to His ascension - **Mt 28:18**
2. As received when He ascended to sit at God's right hand - **Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pe 3:22**
3. Including ruling over the kings of the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords - **Re 1:5; 1 Ti 6:14-15**

B. HE IS HEAD OVER THE CHURCH...

1. He is the head of the body, the church - **Co 1:18**
2. Even as He is the savior of the body - **Ep 5:23**
3. As the Head, He is delegated His authority to His apostles
 - a. Promising His Spirit to guide them into all the truth - **Jn 16:12-13**
 - b. Commanding them to teach others to observe all that He commanded - **Mt 28:20**
 - c. Proclaiming that whoever receives them, receives Him - **Jn 13:20**

CONCLUSION

1. As revealed in the New Testament, Jesus clearly has all authority...
 - a. Which must be confessed in order to be saved - **Ro 10:9; Ph 2:9-11**
 - b. Which will be confessed at the Judgment - **Ro 14:10-12**
2. The key issue, then, is what we do in light of this authority...
 - a. Will we listen to Jesus and heed Him who speaks with such authority?
 - b. Will we as His church allow His apostles to lead us through the authority delegated to them?

Those willing to accept Jesus as Lord, will do what He says (cf. **Lk 6:46**); as prophesied by David, they will freely volunteer in the day of His power (**Psa 110:1-3**). May we all honor and accept the authority of Jesus Christ!

A Man Under Authority

Matthew 8:5-13

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Mt 8:5-13**, we read of the healing of the centurion's servant...
 - a. In which Jesus highly commends the centurion's faith
 - b. Calling the centurion's faith greater than any He had found in Israel
2. This is not the only time we read of military personnel presented in a favorable light...
 - a. There are several Biblical examples of soldiers
 - b. Who were outstanding in their service to God

[In our text, I believe we find why soldiers were often such notable examples of faith and service. Before we consider why, let's first review the examples of...]

I. SOME NOTABLE SOLDIERS IN THE BIBLE

A. JOSHUA AND CALEB...

1. These two men were soldiers who stand out
 - a. They tried to persuade Israel to trust in God, and were threatened with death - **Num 14:6-10**
 - b. In the end, they were the only ones over twenty-one who left Egypt to enter the Promised Land - **Num 14:26-32**
2. Caleb was highly praised by God
 - a. At the time he stood fast for the Lord - **Num 14:24**
 - b. At the time he received the land promised to him - **Josh 14:6-14**
-- It is repeatedly emphasized that he "wholly followed the Lord God of Israel"
3. Joshua was similarly remarkable
 - a. In his farewell address (at age 110), he takes his stand for the Lord - **Josh 24:14-15**
 - b. His influence over his family was great enough that he knew how they would choose

B. CORNELIUS, THE FIRST GENTILE CONVERT...

1. His piety was remembered by the Lord - **Ac 10:1-6**
2. In responding to the vision...
 - a. He immediately sent for Peter - **Ac 10:7-8**
 - b. He prepared an audience by gathering his relatives and close friends - **Ac 10:24**
 - c. He was ready to hear whatever Peter had to say - **Ac 10:33**
3. Cornelius and his family were obedient as implied in **Ac 10:48**

C. THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER, THE EUROPEAN MALE CONVERT...

1. Like Cornelius, his conversion was immediate - **Ac 16:30-34**
2. His family likewise obeyed the gospel

[These four Biblical examples remind me of military men I've known; men with similar dedication to the Lord, and success in influencing their families to follow them in their service to the Lord.]

Coincidence? I think not. What I see is a particular attitude toward authority, one found in the centurion of our text (cf. **Mt 8:8-9**). Consider what is involved with being...]

II. A MAN UNDER AUTHORITY

A. THE MILITARY TEACHES THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHORITY...

1. Without a respected line of authority, chaos would develop
 - a. It is impossible for a large group of individuals to function efficiently without a chain of command that is respected
 - b. Instead of united, coordinated forces, it would be every man for himself!
2. Soldiers are taught to submit to authority immediately
 - a. Delay can be disastrous on the battlefield, where speed can mean the difference between life or death, victory or defeat
 - b. Questioning authority, balking at keeping commands, can easily result in one's own death and that of their comrades
3. Thus the military teaches both:
 - a. How to submit to authority
 - b. How to exercise authority over others
 -- As expressed by the centurion - **Mt 8:8-9**

B. KNOWING HOW TO SUBMIT TO AUTHORITY, MILITARY MEN...

1. Often obey the will of the Lord immediately upon hearing the gospel
 - a. They realize that delay can be disastrous
 - b. They would not hesitate to follow orders if their lives were in danger, why hesitate when their souls are in jeopardy?
2. Often follow the Lord with a "whole heart"
 - a. They understand the need to submit to authority totally
 - b. If it were a game, one might be justified to be halfhearted, not taking things seriously
 - c. But warfare, whether carnal or spiritual, requires complete devotion and total concentration to the task at hand! - cf. **Ep 6:11-13**
3. Often influence their entire families for the Lord
 - a. By such careful submission to the will of the Lord, they set a notable example for their children
 - b. Their children see that serving the Lord is serious business for their father; there must be something to it

C. KNOWING HOW TO EXERCISE AUTHORITY, MILITARY MEN...

1. Often raise their children in subjection
 - a. Obedient to their parents
 - b. Eventually following parental in obedience to the Lord
2. This is not to say they are necessarily strict martinets, but exercising authority...
 - a. With firmness, making it advisable for a child to obey
 - b. With wisdom, making it natural for a child to obey
 - c. With love, making it with willingness for a child to obey
3. Often become elders to rule over the house of God - cf. **1 Ti 3:4-5**
 - a. Having demonstrated their ability to rule over the house of God
 - b. By first exercising authority over their own household

CONCLUSION

1. My purpose is not encourage you to enlist in the military... <grin>
 - a. But to suggest we would do well to remember the examples of those in the military
 - b. For we are to be a people under authority, the authority of Jesus Christ
 - 1) An authority over all things in heaven and on earth - **Mt 28:18**
 - 2) An authority that demands that we do what He has commanded - **Mt 28:19-20**

2. In an aged marked by permissiveness, it behooves Christians to possess a military attitude regarding authority, for we are engaged in a spiritual warfare with Satan and his influences...
 - a. Not submitting to the authority of God with all haste...
 - 1) Could mean the damnation of our own soul
 - 2) And a bad example for our children
 - b. Not exercising our authority as Christian parents...
 - 1) May lead to our children taking the broad way that leads to destruction!
 - 2) May result in delivering our children to Satan on a silver platter!

3. How much better...
 - a. To be like **Caleb**, and “wholly serve the Lord God”
 - b. To be like **Joshua**, and declare “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”
 - Just as our nation says, “Uncle Sam Needs You!” so the Lord’s church says, “The Lord Jesus Christ Needs You!”

Is your faith like **the centurion’s**, who recognized the power of authority when he saw it? If you have not yet obeyed the gospel of Christ, or need to return to the Lord, follow the example of **Cornelius** and the **Philippian jailer** and act immediately! You might save not only yourself, but your children and friends as well!

The Challenge Of Following Jesus

Matthew 8:18-22

INTRODUCTION

1. As Jesus went about His earthly ministry, He was often followed by large multitudes...
 - a. Drawn by His teachings - **Mt 7:28-8:1**
 - b. Attracted by His miracles - **Mt 8:16-18**
2. Some of those who followed Him wanted to become His disciples...
 - a. Willing to be taught by Jesus - e.g., **Mt 5:1-2**
 - b. Wanting to follow Jesus as their Lord and Master - e.g., **Mt 8:19**
3. Jesus would later command His apostles to make disciples of all the nations...
 - a. As found in The Great Commission - **Mt 28:19-20**
 - b. Clearly Jesus wanted people to become His disciples
4. But Jesus never misled the multitudes...
 - a. It would not be easy to be His disciple
 - b. Following Him would be a challenge!
5. In our text for today's study (**Mt 8:18-22**), we find Jesus responding to two individuals regarding the matter of discipleship...
 - a. **The hasty scribe** who wanted to become a disciple
 - b. **The reluctant disciple** who needed to be reminded of what it meant to be a disciple

[This passage should remind us of “**The Challenge Of Following Jesus**”, taken seriously by all who would be His disciples. For instance, in the case of **the hasty scribe** we learn...]

I. ONE MUST BE WILLING TO COUNT THE COST

A. THE SCRIBE'S OFFER...

1. He expresses a willingness to follow Jesus anywhere - **Mt 8:19**
2. A commendable offer, but does he know what it means?

B. THE MASTER'S REPLY...

1. Jesus informs the scribe that He was homeless - **Mt 8:20**
 - a. As an itinerant preacher, Jesus had no place to call home
 - b. Many a night might be spent with no roof overhead
2. To follow Jesus at that time would mean to leave all
 - a. As was necessary for Peter, Andrew, James, and John - **Mt 4:18-22**
 - b. As was encouraged of the rich young ruler - **Mt 19:21**

C. ONE NEEDS TO COUNT THE COST BEFORE BECOMING A DISCIPLE...

1. As Jesus told the multitudes who followed Him - cf. **Lk 14:25-33**
2. One does not have to become homeless to follow Jesus today, but we must still:
 - a. Love Him more than family and life

- b. Forsake all by making Him the Lord and Ruler of our lives
- 3. In our zeal to win souls, do we neglect to tell people the cost of becoming disciples?
 - a. The cost of observing all that Jesus commands? - cf. **Mt 28:20**
 - b. A cost that might require a radical change in one's life?
 - 1) E.g., quitting jobs that interfere with holy living
 - 2) E.g., leaving friends who seek to lead one astray
 - 3) E.g., changing lifestyles, or getting out of unlawful marriages
 - c. That one's "repentance" is fundamental to the gospel message? - cf. **Lk 24:46-47; Ac 2:38; 3:19; 17:30-31; 20:20-21**

[When a person wants to follow Jesus, that is wonderful! But we should remind people there is a cost involved, one they need to consider before they commit. For those who are already disciples, we must never forget "**The Challenge Of Following Jesus**". In the case of **the reluctant disciple**, we are reminded that...]

II. WE MUST BE WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE

A. THE DISCIPLE'S REQUEST...

1. He desires to forego following Jesus in order to bury his father first - **Mt 8:21**
2. Sounds like a devoted son, what harm is there in his request?

B. THE MASTER'S RESPONSE...

1. Jesus tells him to follow Him and let the dead bury their own dead - **Mt 8:22**
 - a. I.e., let the spiritually dead bury the physical dead
 - b. Others could handle such familial tasks, his responsibility was to answer to a higher calling
2. Jesus often made it clear...to follow Him meant putting Him before family
 - a. As we saw earlier - **Lk 14:26**
 - b. As He taught His disciples in preparation for The Limited Commission - **Mt 10:34-37**
 - c. As He set the pattern on one occasion when His family was seeking Him - cf. **Mt 12:46-50**

C. WE NEED TO PAY THE PRICE OF BEING DISCIPLES...

1. As disciples, we are taught there may be a price to pay to remain faithful
 - a. As Paul taught the new disciples on his first journey - **Ac 14:21-22**
 - b. As Paul wrote to Timothy at the end of his life - **2 Ti 3:10-12**
2. Far too often, disciples today want to first "bury the dead", such as:
 - a. Putting family responsibilities before the Lord
 - 1) E.g., missing services to entertain visiting family or friends
 - 2) Did not Jesus tell Martha some things take precedent over the desire to be a gracious host? - **Lk 10:38-42**
 - b. Accepting jobs when they know it will hinder their service to the Lord
 - 1) E.g., occupations that are so demanding, one has little time or energy left
 - 2) You might think them necessary to support family, but did not Jesus promise that God will provide if you put the kingdom first? - **Mt 6:31-33**
3. In our zeal to provide for our families, do we forget that we are disciples of Christ?
 - a. There are many good things that can be done in relation to kin and occupation
 - b. But as disciples of Christ, we have a higher and more noble calling - **1 Pe 2:9-10**
 - 1) As a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own special

- people
- 2) To proclaim the praises of God who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light
- c. If we can't "bury the dead" without neglecting our service to Jesus, then "let the dead bury the dead"!

CONCLUSION

1. In many places, the Lord's church suffers through neglect...
 - a. Attendance is sporadic
 - b. Service rendered is minimal
 - c. Discipleship is practiced only when convenient
2. There may be many reasons for this, but I suspect two head the list...
 - a. Teaching the gospel without mention of the cost of discipleship
 - b. Disciples who have forgotten there is a price to pay for following Jesus
3. In an age of **easy believism**, do not forget "**The Challenge Of Following Jesus**"...
 - a. Let **the hasty scribe** remind you to count the cost of becoming a disciple
 - b. Let **the reluctant disciple** remind you of the need to pay the price of being a follower of Jesus!

This is one of the paradoxes of Christianity: the salvation that Jesus offers is a free gift, but it comes at a high cost. Jesus truly "paid it all", so one cannot earn their salvation; but as our Savior and Lord He requires that we have the servant mentality:

"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" (Lk 17:10)

Have you counted the cost? Are you willing to pay the price? Both are required to follow Jesus!

The Call Of Matthew

Matthew 9:9-13

INTRODUCTION

1. Who is a suitable prospect...
 - a. For the kingdom of God?
 - b. For becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ?
2. Who among your neighbors, friends, etc., do you think are most likely to receive the gospel?
 - a. Those who are devout, religious, and respectable?
 - b. Or those who may be ungodly, irreligious, and socially unacceptable?
3. If any passage ought to give us caution against prejudging suitable prospects for the gospel...
 - a. It should be **Mt 9:9-13**
 - b. In which we read of **“The Call Of Matthew”**

[In this passage we learn lessons by way of precept and example regarding discipleship and the mind of Christ that we do well to remember. Let's begin by turning our attention to...]

I. MATTHEW'S CALL AT WORK

A. MATTHEW, THE MAN...

1. His name was also Levi - cf. **Mt 9:9; Lk 5:27**
2. Mark mentions him as the son of Alphaeus - **Mk 2:14**
 - a. Note that another apostle, James, was also named the son of Alphaeus - **Mt 10:3**
 - b. This has led some to think they were half-brothers, but many doubt this

B. MATTHEW, THE TAX COLLECTOR...

1. His occupation was one of collecting taxes for Rome
2. The term “publican” describes this position, filled by Jews contracted by the Romans to collect taxes from their brethren
3. As such, they were highly despised and equated with sinners - cf. **Mt 9:11; 18:17**

C. MATTHEW, THE CALLED DISCIPLE...

1. Perhaps to the amazement of many, Jesus tells him to **“Follow Me”** - **Mt 9:9a**
 - a. This was a call to become His disciple - cf. **Mt 4:18-22**
 - b. Contrary to what may have been the expectations of many, Jesus saw something in Matthew that made him a suitable prospect
2. Matthew demonstrates that Jesus' estimation of him is not unwarranted
 - a. He accepts the call of Jesus: **“he arose and followed Him”** - **Mt 9:9b**
 - b. Just as Peter, Andrew, James and John had done earlier
3. Of course, this same tax collector, despised by his Jewish brethren...
 - a. Became one of the twelve apostles - **Mt 10:1-4**
 - b. Wrote this gospel of Matthew attempting to save his own brethren in the flesh!

[That such a despised tax collector could be a useful disciple to Jesus becomes apparent even more as we read next about...]

II. MATTHEW'S FEAST AT HOME

A. THE NATURE OF THE GUESTS...

1. Matthew threw a feast in honor of his new Master - **Mt 9:10a**
 - a. But then...*“many tax collectors and sinners came”* - **Mt 9:10b**
 - b. Who *“sat down with Him and His disciples”* - **Mt 9:10c**
2. As host, Matthew undoubtedly invited and permitted his ungodly friends to sit and mingle with the Lord and His disciples!
 - Didn't Matthew know what social customs he was violating? Of course, but he had already learned a lesson that was about to be taught to others

B. THE CHALLENGE OF THE PHARISEES...

1. This religious sect of the Jews are shocked - **Mt 9:11**
 - a. The Pharisees were separatists (the name means “separated ones”)
 - b. They were strict observers of the traditions of the elders, especially when it came to ceremonial cleanness - cf. **Mk 7:3**
2. They wonder why Jesus would eat with tax collectors and sinners (the latter likely including prostitutes)
 - a. They inquire of Jesus' disciples
 - b. Likely they did so standing outside, as the disciples themselves went in and out, for it is unlikely they would dare go into such a gathering of sinners!

C. THE RESPONSE OF THE SAVIOR...

1. **An explanation** for why it is proper for Him to mingle with sinners - **Mt 9:12-13**
 - a. It is the sick, not those who are well, who need the care of a physician
 - b. So it sinners, not the righteous, who need Someone calling them to repentance
2. **A rebuke** for what was lacking in their own lives - **Mt 9:13**
 - a. Sacrifice without mercy means nothing, as taught in **Hos 6:6**
 - b. Implying that their religious devotion lacked the quality of mercy, or they would not have so despised sinners in need of salvation

[In the call of Matthew followed by the feast at his house, Jesus by precept and example taught important lessons concerning evangelism and discipleship. To elaborate, let me share...]

III. SOME OBSERVATIONS

A. DON'T PREJUDGE YOURSELF OR OTHERS...

1. Don't think one is ever too wicked to become a disciple of Jesus
 - a. Either yourself or someone else
 - b. Few could surpass Paul for the sins of which he was guilty, yet the Lord saved him - cf. **1 Ti 1:12-16**
2. Jesus sees people, not for what they are, but for what they can become
 - a. As in the case of Simon, whom He called Cephas (Peter) - cf. **Jn 1:40-42**
 - b. Peter did not live up to his name (a rock), until several years of growth as a disciple
3. We must never forget...
 - a. Jesus died to save sinners

- b. No Christian is perfect, only forgiven
- c. A saint is a sinner who keeps on trying
- d. Churches grow out of weakness, not strength
 - 1) I.e., willing to accept weak, imperfect members, helping to them grow
 - 2) A church never grows by turning away weak people
- e. What Jesus said to the Pharisees: "...tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you" - **Mt 21:31**

B. DON'T CONFUSE SEPARATION WITH ISOLATION...

- 1. It is true that we must be separate - cf. **2 Co 6:14-17**
 - a. We cannot have fellowship with sin
 - b. We cannot engage in the wicked deeds of others
- 2. But we must not isolate ourselves - cf. **1 Co 5:9-12**
 - a. We may withdraw from an erring brother, true
 - b. But we cannot withdraw from those in the world
- 3. While not of the world, we have been sent into world - **Jn 17:15-18**
 - a. To be the salt of the earth, we must mingle with the meat - **Mt 5:13**
 - b. To be the light of the world, we must shine in the darkness - **Mt 5:14-16**
- While we must be concerned about the influence of the wrong kind of friends (**1 Co 15:33**), we must be willing to reach out to those who are lost!

C. DON'T FORGET THE IMPORTANCE OF MERCY...

- 1. We cannot receive forgiveness if we are not merciful - **Mt 6:14-15**
- 2. We will be judged by a standard with no mercy if we are not merciful - **Ja 2:12-13**
- 3. Religion (sacrifice) without mercy is not pleasing to God!

CONCLUSION

- 1. In "**The Call Of Matthew**", Jesus demonstrated the transforming power of the gospel...
 - a. Able to take a despised tax collector and turn him into a beloved apostle
 - b. Able to appeal to social outcasts, providing love and hope for a new life
- 2. By the feast at his house, Matthew demonstrated the transforming power of the gospel...
 - a. Turning one who likely had been motivated by greed into a gracious host
 - b. Making one who may have formerly reveled in the evil conduct of his friends, now concerned about their spiritual well-being

If upon honest reflection of this passage we see ourselves more like the Pharisees than Jesus or his newfound disciple, may the words of Jesus move us to repent of our self-righteousness:

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." (Mt 9:12-13)

Are you in need of the spiritual healing provided by the Great Physician...?

Moved By Compassion

Matthew 9:35-38

INTRODUCTION

1. A major problem regarding evangelism today is the lack of motivation...
 - a. Many Christians seem to lack the motivation to reach out to others
 - 1) Years go by, and little is done to share the gospel with others
 - 2) Rather than being troubled by this fact, many just attain a state of complacency
 - b. Yet motivation is “the steam that drives the train”
 - 1) With proper motivation, a Christian will seek to save the lost
 - 2) Even if they don’t know how, they will not rest until they are doing something that might lead others to Christ
2. What motivated Jesus to save the lost?
 - a. What prompted Him to come to this earth?
 - b. What propelled Him to go from city to city with the gospel of the kingdom?
 - c. What moved Him to endure the shame and pain of dying on the cross?
3. Several factors could be listed...
 - a. His strong sense of purpose (to do His Father’s will) - **Jn 6:38**
 - b. The Father’s love (which He wanted to share) - **Jn 15:9; 17:26**
 - c. The potential condemnation those He sought to save (of which He warned) - **Mt 10:28**
 - d. The joy set before Him (helping Him to endure the cross) - **He 12:2**
 - Each of these factors can help motivate us as well
4. But there was one factor which is mentioned in the text for our study today...
 - a. Our text being **Mt 9:35-38**, in which we read of the ongoing ministry of Jesus
 - b. Notice **vs. 36**, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them...”

[Compassion for the lost...could the lack thereof explain why many Christians do not actively seek to save others? To help answer that question, let’s first take a closer look at...]

I. JESUS’ COMPASSION FOR THE LOST

A. JESUS HAD COMPASSION FOR THE LOST...

1. As mentioned on numerous occasions
 - a. In our text - **Mt 9:36**
 - b. Prior to feeding the five thousand - **Mt 14:14**
 - c. Prior to feeding the four thousand - **Mt 15:32**
 - d. Toward various individuals
 - 1) A leper - **Mk 1:40-41**
 - 2) A demon-possessed man - **Mk 5:1-20** (cf. verse **19**)
 - 3) The widow of Nain who had lost her son - **Lk 7:11-15**
 - 4) The two blind men - **Mt 20:30-34**
2. He was moved with compassion when He saw people:

- a. Weary and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd
- b. Suffering from diseases, demon possession, and hungry

B. HIS COMPASSION MOVED HIM...

- 1. To heal the sick and demon-possessed, raise the dead, and feed the hungry
- 2. To personally teach those in need of a Shepherd - cf. **Mk 6:34**
- 3. To call upon His disciples to pray for more laborers - **Mt 9:37-38**
- 4. To send out His disciples as laborers - **Mt 10:1-7**

[Jesus was truly “**Moved By Compassion**” for the lost. Thus motivated, He did what He could to meet their needs, especially their need for salvation! Now let’s a few moments to consider...]

II. OUR COMPASSION FOR THE LOST

A. DO WE HAVE COMPASSION FOR THE LOST?

- 1. Are we moved when we see...
 - a. Multitudes of people who are without Christ?
 - b. Individuals who are lost in sin?
- 2. Can we say we have compassion for the lost, if we’ve made...
 - a. No effort to teach someone the gospel?
 - b. Little effort to even get to know those who are lost?
- 3. What have you done in the past year for the lost?
 - a. The answer to this question reveals much about our compassion
 - b. Are you pleased with the answer?

B. HOW CAN WE DEVELOP COMPASSION...?

- 1. Does our inactivity suggest a lack of compassion?
 - a. Is it evident that we have not been as concerned for the lost as we should be?
 - b. What can we do to develop compassion?
- 2. Compassion for lost souls can be developed by...
 - a. Letting God teach us how to love - cf. **1 Th 4:9; 1 Jn 3:16-17**
 - 1) God teaches us through the example of His Son
 - 2) By frequent contemplation of God’s love for us, the more we will love others!
-- Thus the Word of God is essential for developing compassion
 - b. Spending time around people
 - 1) To love people, we need to get to know them
 - a) As stated by Will Rogers, “I never met a man I did not like”
 - b) The more we come to know people, the more likely we become concerned about their well being
 - 2) We need to beware of becoming isolated from people
 - a) Certain technological advances can be a hindrance to getting out and being with people (e.g., television, air conditioning, computers)
 - b) Remember, Jesus was often moved by compassion when among the “multitudes” and “individuals”

C. HOW SHOULD COMPASSION MOVE US...?

- 1. To do whatever we personally can do...
 - a. Such as teach others - cf. **Mk 6:34**
 - b. Unable to teach? Then compassion should move us to:

- 1) Learn to teach others - cf. **He 5:12; 1 Pe 3:15**
- 2) Make arrangements for others to be taught
 - a) As Philip did for Nathaniel - **Jn 1:45-46**
 - b) As Cornelius did for family and friends - cf. **Ac 10:24,33**
2. To seek to involve others in saving the lost...
 - a. By praying that the Lord will send more laborers - **Mt 9:38**
 - 1) This is something everyone can do
 - 2) Even if we can't yet teach, we can pray! - e.g., **2 Th 3:1**
 - b. By sending out others to teach - **Mt 10:1,5-7**
 - 1) Jesus did more than teach, He trained and sent out His disciples
 - 2) We can be involved with sending out others also
 - a) Encouraging the training of those willing to teach
 - b) Supporting financially those who go out to teach - **Ph 4:15-16; 3 Jn 5-8**

CONCLUSION

1. Without compassion for the lost, there is no "steam"..
 - a. We may have the knowledge and the opportunity to teach others
 - b. But like a train on a track with no steam, we will just sit there
 - Is that what we have been doing regarding evangelism? Could it be we are lacking the "steam" necessary for evangelism?
2. With compassion for the lost, we will not rest until we are doing something..
 - a. It may not be the same thing as others, but it will be something
 - b. If we don't know how or what to do, compassion will motivate us to keep looking, studying, etc., until we find something to do
 - For as the "steam" builds, we will not be satisfied until we begin moving and releasing the steam,
just as Jeremiah said:

"Then I said, 'I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name.' But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not." (Jer 20:9)

May the example of our Lord Jesus, the true Word of God, whose compassion moved Him to save us, burn in our hearts until we too are **"Moved By Compassion"**!

The Twelve Apostles

Matthew 10:1-4

INTRODUCTION

1. Upon what is your faith in Jesus Christ based...?
 - a. His miracles?
 - b. His teachings?
 - c. His resurrection from the dead?
2. In reality, our faith is based upon the words of the apostles of Jesus Christ...
 - a. Apart from their gospels and letters, we know virtually nothing about Him
 - b. They are the ones who tell us about His life, miracles, and resurrection
3. Jesus acknowledged that our faith in Him would depend upon their word...
 - a. As indicated in His prayer for them - **Jn 17:20**
 - b. The Lord expected us to believe in Him through their word
4. Who are these men upon which our faith is based...?
 - a. What does the Bible and history tell us about them?
 - b. Are they credible witnesses that we should believe?
 - c. What is their role in the church of our Lord?
5. In **Mt 10:1-4**, we find the names of the twelve apostles...
 - a. Matthew lists their names as they were sent on “**The Limited Commission**” - **Mt 10:5-7**
 - b. Mark and Luke lists their names when appointed as apostles - cf. **Mk 3:13-19; Lk 6:13-16**

[In this lesson I wish to focus our attention on “**The Twelve Apostles**”, upon whom our faith is based, and for whom we should be so grateful. Let’s start by taking a closer look at...]

I. THE IDENTITY OF THE APOSTLES

A. THE FIRST FOUR...

1. **Simon, who is called Peter**
 - a. Introduced to Jesus by his brother, Andrew - **Jn 1:40-41**
 - b. Given the name Cephas (Peter) by Jesus - **Jn 1:42**
 - c. A fisherman, called to follow Jesus along with Andrew - **Mt 4:18-20**
 - d. Known for being impetuous; for example:
 - 1) When Jesus walked on the sea - **Mt 14:25-29**
 - 2) When Jesus foretold His death and resurrection - **Mt 16:21-23**
 - 3) When Jesus foretold of some who would stumble - **Mt 26:31-35**
 - 4) When Jesus was arrested in the garden - **Jn 18:10-11**
 - e. Known for his failures; for example:
 - 1) Doubting when walking to Jesus on the sea - **Mt 14:30-31**
 - 2) Denying the Lord three times - **Mt 26:69-75**
 - 3) Leading himself and others into hypocrisy - **Ga 2:11-13**
 - f. But eventually living up to meaning of his given name (a rock)

- 1) Restored by Jesus after His resurrection - **Jn 21:15-19**
 - 2) Directing the selection to replace Judas Iscariot - **Ac 1:15-26**
 - 3) Preaching the first gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost - **Ac 2:14-41**
 - 4) Instrumental in the church at Jerusalem - **Ac 3-6**; cf. **Ga 1:18; 2:1-10**
 - 5) The first to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles - **Ac 10-11; 15:6-11**
2. **Andrew, brother of Simon**
- a. A disciple of John the Baptist, he was one of Jesus' first disciples - **Jn 1:35-40**
 - b. He led his brother Simon (Peter) to Jesus - **Jn 1:41-42**
 - c. A fisherman, called to follow Jesus along with Simon - **Mt 4:18-20**
 - d. He introduced some Greeks to Jesus - **Jn 12:20-22**
3. **James the son of Zebedee**
- a. Brother of John - **Mt 10:2**
 - b. A fisherman, called to follow Jesus along with John - **Mt 4:21-22**
 - c. Perhaps because of fiery temperament (evidenced in **Lk 9:52-54**), he and his brother were called "Sons of Thunder" by Jesus- **Mk 3:17**
 - d. While seeking glory, they were promised suffering - **Mk 10:35-40**
 - e. Indeed, James was the first of the apostles to be killed - **Ac 12:1-2**
4. **John, brother of James**
- a. Called along with his brother, James - **Mt 4:21-22**
 - b. Along with brother and father, they were partners with Peter - **Lk 5:10**
 - c. Like his brother, he appeared quick to judge others - cf. **Lk 9:49,54**
 - d. But he became "the beloved disciple whom Jesus loved"
 - 1) Who sat next to Jesus during the Last Supper - **Jn 13:23**
 - 2) Who was given charge to care for Jesus' mother - **Jn 19:26-27**
 - 3) Who was among the first to see the empty tomb - **Jn 20:2-8**
 - 4) Who recognized Jesus following the resurrection - **Jn 21:7**
 - 5) Who made veiled references to himself in the gospel of John - **Jn 21:20-24**
- Of these four, **Peter, James** and **John** became "**the inner circle**" of Jesus' disciples. They were present when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter (**Mk 5:37**), saw the transfiguration (**Mt 17:1**), and asked to support Christ during His agony in Gethsemane (**Mt 26:36-37**).

B. THE REMAINING EIGHT...

5. **Philip**
- a. Called by Jesus, the day after He met Peter and Andrew - **Jn 1:43**
 - b. From Bethsaida, home of Peter and Andrew - **Jn 1:44**
 - c. He led Nathaniel to Jesus - **Jn 1:45-46**
 - d. He with Andrew brought the inquiring Greeks to Jesus - **Jn 12:21-22**
 - e. He was the one who asked Jesus, "Show us the Father" - **Jn 14:8-9**
6. **Bartholomew**
- a. He is traditionally considered to be Nathanael, because he is connected to Philip in the lists of the apostles in the Gospels - **Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16**
 - b. If so, then he was introduced to Jesus by Philip - **Jn 1:45-46**
 - c. And was praised by Jesus as having no guile - **Jn 1:47-51**
 - d. He lived in Cana, and saw Jesus after the resurrection - **Jn 21:1-14**
7. **Thomas**
- a. He was also called The Twin (Didymus) - **Jn 20:24**
 - b. At one point he was willing to die for Jesus - **Jn 11:16**
 - c. After the resurrection, he required empirical evidence before he would believe that Jesus was alive - **Jn 20:24-25**

- d. A week later, such evidence was provided - **Jn 20:26-28**
- 8. **Matthew the tax collector**
 - a. Also known as Levi - **Mt 9:9; Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27**
 - b. Called the son of Alphaeus, leading some to think he was related to James the son of Alphaeus - **Mk 2:14; 10:3**
 - c. Called to follow Jesus from his tax office, and later gave a feast at his home in honor of Jesus - **Mt 9:9-13**
- 9. **James the son of Alphaeus**
 - a. He may be “James the Less”, son of Mary (who witnessed Jesus’ death, sought to prepare Him for burial, and found the tomb empty) - **Mk 15:40; 16:1**
 - b. Other than in the lists of apostles, he is not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture
- 10. **Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus**
 - a. Evidently the same as “Judas, not Iscariot” (**Jn 14:22**) and “Judas, brother of James” - **Lk 6:16; Ac 1:13**
 - b. He is not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture
- 11. **Simon the Cananite (Cananaean)**
 - a. Also called “the Zealot” - **Lk 6:15; Ac 1:13**
 - b. As such he had been a member of a radical party seeking to destroy Roman rule
- 12. **Matthias, who replaced Judas Iscariot the betrayer**
 - a. Judas, of course, would later betray Jesus and hang himself - **Mt 26:14-16,47-50; 27:3-10**
 - b. In his place, Matthias was chosen - **Ac 1:15-26**
 - c. He had evidently been with Jesus from His baptism until His ascension - cf. **Ac 1:21-22**

[What an amazing and diverse collection of men upon which to trust the continuation of His mission! Men with personal failings, from opposite ends of the political spectrum. Yet Jesus took this band of men, worked with them for three years, and through them turned the world upside down! Let’s now consider what is revealed in Scripture about...]

II. THE MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLES

A. AS WITNESSES FOR THE RESURRECTION...

- 1. Jesus had shown Himself alive through various proofs - **Ac 1:1-3**
- 2. Jesus commissioned them to testify concerning Him - **Ac 1:8**
- 3. Peter explained that the apostles were to be witnesses for the resurrection - **Ac 1:21-22**
- 4. Thus they testified again and again - **Ac 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:30-32; 10:39-41; 13:29-31**
- The apostles served the important role of providing historical and legal proof that Jesus arose from the dead, so that our faith in Him might rest on a solid basis!

B. AS TEACHERS FOR THE DISCIPLES...

- 1. Jesus did not reveal all during His earthly ministry - **Jn 16:12**
- 2. The Holy Spirit would reveal all the truth, working through the apostles - **Jn 16: 13-14; cf. 14:25-26**
- 3. Thus the apostles’ doctrine became the authority for the church, as commissioned by Jesus - **Mt 28:20; Ac 2:42**
- 4. This doctrine they preserved in their writings - e.g., **2 Pe 3:1-2**
- Through His apostles, Jesus continues to instruct His church as we continue steadfastly in their teachings!

C. AS THE FOUNDATION FOR THE CHURCH...

1. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles, with Christ as the cornerstone - **Ep 2:19-22**
 - a. Their eyewitness testimony is the basis of our faith
 - b. Their teaching is basis of our doctrine and practice
2. Their names are even depicted as written on the foundation for the New Jerusalem, which is the Lamb's bride (the church) - **Re 21:9-10,14**

[To such a small and simple group of men Jesus entrusted the future of His church! Was His trust well-founded? Well, consider what we know from Scripture and tradition concerning...]

III. THE DEDICATION OF THE APOSTLES

A. IN CARRYING OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION...

1. They were commanded to make disciples of all the nations - **Mt 28:19**
 - a. We read of the early work of the apostles in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria in the book of Acts
 - b. We can also read Peter's letters to those throughout Asia Minor (Turkey)
2. From sources outside the Bible, we are told:
 - a. **Peter** is thought to have traveled to Rome, and possibly Babylon - cf. **1 Pe 5:13**
 - b. **Andrew** is said to have preached in Bithynia, Scythia, Greece, and among the Parthians
 - c. **James** the brother of John is said to have preached in India and Spain before he was beheaded by Herod
 - d. **John, brother of James**, spent time in Patmos, later in Ephesus, and is thought by some to have established the churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and Thyatira
 - e. **Philip** ministered in Phrygia
 - f. **Bartholomew** is said to have taken the gospel of Matthew to India
 - g. **Thomas** is also thought to have traveled to India
 - h. **Matthew** is said to have preached 15 years in Palestine, and then went to Ethiopia, Macedonia, Syria, Persia, Parthia and Medea
 - i. **James the son of Alphaeus** - little is known of any work outside Jerusalem
 - j. **Thaddaeus** is said to preached in Syria and Edessa
 - k. **Simon the zealot** is said to have preached the gospel in Mauritania, Africa, and even in Britain
 - l. **Matthias** is thought to have gone to Damascus
 - While much of the above is not known for sure, it does seem to coincide with Paul's statements concerning the spread of the gospel - **Ro 10:14-18; Co 1:23**

B. IN GIVING THEIR LIVES FOR THE LORD...

1. The apostles suffered much for the Lord
 - a. As He warned them - **Jn 15:18-20**
 - b. As Paul described in **1 Co 4:9-13**
2. But they did more than suffer discomfort, in most cases they gave their lives
 - a. **Peter** - crucified upside down in Rome
 - b. **Andrew** - imprisoned in Greece, then crucified on a cross, the two ends of which were fixed transversely in the ground (from which came the term, St. Andrew's Cross)
 - c. **James** - beheaded by Herod - **Ac 12:1-2**
 - d. **John** - the only apostle thought to avoid a violent death

- e. **Philip** - scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified
- f. **Bartholomew** - said to have been placed into a sack and thrown into the sea, some say he was crucified
- g. **Thomas** - thrust through with a spear in India
- h. **Matthew** - said by some to have died a natural death, by others that he died in Ethiopia, being slain with a halberd (pike fitted with an ax head) in the city of Nadabah
- i. **James the son of Alphaeus** - stoned by the Jews for preaching Christ
- j. **Thaddaeus** - unknown
- k. **Simon the Zealot** - suffered martyrdom under Trajan; some think crucified in Britain
- l. **Matthias** - said to have been stoned and then beheaded

CONCLUSION

1. Do we appreciate the significance of the “supreme sacrifice” these men made...?
 - a. Their willingness to suffer and die strengthens the credibility of their testimony
 - b. And what is that testimony? That Jesus died for our sins and rose from the grave!
 - They were not motivated by money or power; they were compelled by events they could never deny having seen and heard!
2. Through “**The Twelve Apostles**”, we see the power of faith in Christ, transforming...
 - a. Judgmental disciples into apostles of love (e.g., John)
 - a. Political enemies into beloved brethren! (e.g., Matthew and Simon the Zealot)
 - b. Cowards who denied Jesus into confessors who died for Him (e.g., Peter)
3. In “**The Twelve Apostles**”, we have the basis for faith in Christ, providing...
 - a. The foundation of our faith in Christ through their testimony
 - b. The foundation of our belief and practice through their writings

May we who are “built on the foundation of the apostles” (**Ep 2:20**), never forget these 12 humble disciples who faithfully answered the call of their Lord.

May their example inspire us to greater faithfulness in our service to Christ!

Principles Of Evangelism - I

Matthew 10:5-10

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Mt 28:19-20**, Jesus gave what is commonly called “**The Great Commission**”...
 - a. In which His apostles were charged to make disciples of all the nations
 - b. A charge or commission which still holds true today for His church
2. As we seek to carry out “**The Great Commission**” today...
 - a. What principles should govern our efforts?
 - b. Has the Lord provided any advice or counsel as to how we might best go about the work of evangelism?
3. In **Mt 10:5-42**, we find what is commonly called “**The Limited Commission**”...
 - a. A charge given to the apostles during the earthly ministry of Jesus - **Mt 10:1-5**
 - b. So-called because He limited their work to the house of Israel - **Mt 10:5-6**
 - c. In which the Lord gave instructions to govern them as they sought to carry out their work
4. From the instructions of Jesus, we can glean some “**Principles Of Evangelism**”...
 - a. Principles that helped them also carry out “The Great Commission”
 - b. Principles that can help us be more successful in evangelism today

[In this lesson and one to follow, I want to point out at least ten principles that Jesus applied in sending out His apostles. They are principles that I believe can prove successful today. The first one is...]

I. UTILIZE THE POWER OF SYNERGY

A. THE APOSTLES WERE SENT OUT TWO-BY-TWO...

1. As evident from Mark’s account - cf. **Mt 10:5a** with **Mk 6:7**
2. A practice continued...
 - a. When Jesus sent out the seventy - **Lk 10:1**
 - b. When the Spirit sent out Paul and Barnabas - **Ac 13:2**
 - c. When Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways - **Ac 15:36-40**

B. THIS ILLUSTRATES THE PRINCIPLE OF SYNERGY...

1. **Synergy**: “The working together of two things (muscles or drugs for example) to produce an effect greater than the sum of their individual effects”
2. Two or more preachers working together can do more than by working separately
 - a. They encourage one another, and help each other - cf. **Ecc 4:9-10**
 - b. A plurality of witnesses lend credibility to their story - cf. **Jn 8:17**

C. MAKING APPLICATION TODAY...

1. The practice of two or more preachers working together should be encouraged
 - a. Especially in foreign fields or difficult areas
 - b. Through the principle of synergy they can be effective in one area more quickly, and then move on to the next

- c. This is better than preachers working alone, struggling for years by themselves
- 2. Small congregations in the same area might need to ask themselves which is better...
 - a. Trying to maintain two struggling works
 - b. Or perhaps becoming one in order to grow faster, swarming later into two separate and larger congregations
- 3. In one's own personal evangelism...
 - a. Seek out a companion in the congregation with similar interests
 - b. Go together in visiting, teaching home studies, etc.

[Perhaps much of the slow growth in evangelism today is a failure to appreciate the principle of synergy which was applied by the Lord and the early church. Another principle to consider is...]

II. EMPLOY THE PRACTICE OF SPECIALIZATION

A. THE APOSTLES WERE SENT TO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL...

- 1. Which is why this is called "The Limited Commission" - **Mt 10:5-6**
 - a. Circumstances limited the arena in which they were to go
 - b. E.g., their mission was to prepare people for Jesus' coming, and their time was limited - **Mt 10:23**; cf. **Lk 10:1-2**
- 2. Later, in carrying out "The Great Commission", the apostles had their individual "focus groups"
 - a. Peter focused on the circumcised (Jews), while Paul focused on the uncircumcised (Gentiles) - **Ga 2:7-9**
 - b. Paul also focused on going where others had not gone - **Ro 15:20**

B. THIS ILLUSTRATES THE VALUE OF SPECIALIZATION...

- 1. **Specialization**
 - a. The act of specializing; making something suitable for a special purpose
 - b. The special line of work you have adopted as your career
- 2. Certain skills, backgrounds, circumstances, etc., may make us more suitable to a certain area of endeavor
 - a. We need to appreciate the diversity of function - **Ro 12:3-5**
 - b. We should not hesitate to focus in our area of expertise or opportunity - **Ro 12:6-8**

C. MAKING APPLICATION TODAY...

- 1. Preachers may choose to focus on certain areas or groups of people
 - a. Based upon their background, ethnicity, or personal skills
 - b. Some may be well-suited for foreign work, others for local work; some may be well-suited for holding gospel meetings, others may be better at personal work
 - c. Time is limited, none can do it all
 - 1) We should not expect every preacher to be alike
 - 2) We should appreciate those who focus on their particular "mission field"
- 2. As a congregation...
 - a. It's focus may depend upon several factors
 - 1) The make up of its members and their abilities
 - 2) The community in which the church is located
 - b. While the congregation should try to reach all, it might focus on certain areas for which it is well-suited
 - 1) E.g., senior citizens or young people

- 2) E.g., the affluent or poor
- 3) E.g., certain ethnic groups as opposed to others
3. In one's own personal evangelism...
 - a. You might concentrate on your peer group
 - b. You might focus on a particular type of evangelism for which you are well-suited

[Certainly we should not specialize to the point that we refuse to help those who come our way; but there is value in utilizing one's strengths and circumstances, being selective in the direction we go. The next principle is most essential...]

III. PROCLAIM THE WORD OF GOD

A. THE APOSTLES WERE SENT TO PREACH...

1. In "The Limited Commission", the subject was the kingdom of heaven - **Mt 10:7**
2. In "The Great Commission", it was expanded to include the gospel of Christ - **Mk 16:15**
 - a. So Philip the evangelist preached when he went to Samaria - **Ac 8:12**
 - b. So Paul preached in synagogues and from house to house - **Ac 19:8; 20:18-21,25;**

B. THIS ILLUSTRATES WHAT SHOULD BE OUR THEME...

1. It should always be the Word of God, the Gospel:
 - a. Which is God's power unto salvation - **Ro 1:16**
 - b. Able to save the souls of those who receive meekly - **Ja 1:21**
2. As Paul instructed Timothy: "Preach the word!" - **2 Ti 4:1-5**

C. MAKING APPLICATION TODAY...

1. Preachers need to avoid things...
 - a. Which entertain, rather than provide sound doctrine
 - b. Based more upon the ideas of men, rather than the Word of God
 - Text based, expository preaching can help keep preachers in the Word
2. Churches should consider what message they are presenting to the lost...
 - a. Is it the gospel of health and wealth, or the gospel of Christ?
 - b. Are we call for people to become just church members, or disciples of Jesus?
3. In one's own evangelism...
 - a. Do not get sidetracked on various issues
 - b. While many subjects may have their place, they may be "second principles" rather than "first principles"
 - c. The lost need to know the gospel of Jesus Christ and His kingdom, first and foremost!

[The next principle is also taken from the words of Jesus to His disciples in "The Limited Commission"...]

IV. OFFER OUR SERVICES FREELY

A. THE APOSTLES WERE TO "FREELY GIVE"...

1. They were empowered to cast out demons and heal the sick - **Mt 10:1**
 - a. Such signs were for the purpose of confirming their message
 - b. As their use was explained later - cf. **Mk 16:17-20; He 2:3-4**
2. They were to offer this service freely - **Mt 10:8**

B. THIS ILLUSTRATES THE IMPORTANCE OF “PRACTICING WHAT YOU PREACH”...

1. We preach a gospel of salvation offered as a gift - cf. **Ro 6:23**
2. Jesus certainly gave Himself freely, that we might be rich - **2 Co 8:9**
3. To charge people for the message we preach would be incongruous to the spirit of the message
 - a. Do we want them to take our message of sacrificial love and the gift of salvation seriously?
 - b. Then what we have to offer the lost should be without charge!

C. MAKING APPLICATION TODAY...

1. Preachers have to be careful
 - a. They do have a right for support (see next point)
 - b. But they should not seek to get rich through their ministry
 - 1) It is one thing to charge for the cost of producing materials
 - 2) It is another to charge above expenses with the view of making money
 - c. One sign of a false teacher or prophet is to exploit others by engaging in “covetous practices” - cf. **2 Pe 2:3,14**
2. Churches should also consider what they offer the community
 - a. E.g., services such as television and radio programs, audio tapes, videos, Bible correspondence courses, etc.
 - b. Congregations which offer such things freely...
 - 1) Display the spirit of the gospel
 - 2) Avoid the appearance of “being interested only in people’s money”
3. In one’s own evangelism...
 - a. Offer your message freely
 - b. What gifts or abilities to serve you might have, offer without cost
 - c. By the grace of God you are what you are, following the example of Jesus and His apostles in offering themselves freely to the lost

[At the same time, there is another principle of evangelism which relates to when one might receive support for their labor...]

V. SUPPORT THOSE WILLING TO WORK

A. THE APOSTLES WERE ALLOWED MONETARY SUPPORT...

1. For which reason they were not to take anything - **Mt 10:9-10**
2. They could be supported by those who willing to provide for them - cf. **Lk 10:7-8**

B. THIS ILLUSTRATES THE PRINCIPLE OF SUPPORTING WORKERS...

1. As expounded upon by Paul in **1 Co 4:4-14**
 - a. The right to forego secular work in order to serve in spiritual matters
 - b. The right to receive carnal things in return for spiritual service
 - c. A principle taught in the Law, and by Christ Himself
2. Applied to elders who rule well - **1 Ti 5:17-18**
3. A practice encouraged by John many years later - **3 Jn 5-8**

C. MAKING APPLICATION TODAY...

1. Preachers may rightly receive support for their labors

- a. It allows them to concentrate their efforts in matters of the gospel
- b. Of course, this support should come from those who are Christians, and should not be a means of accumulating wealth (see previous point)
2. Churches have an important role in such support
 - a. Churches can provide support of preachers - **2 Co 11:8-9**
 - b. Much foreign evangelism goes undone today, not because preachers are unwilling to go, but because churches have not been willing to send and support - cf. **Ro 10:15**
3. In one's own efforts...
 - a. There is nothing limiting an individual from helping to support preachers
 - b. While one might help support a local congregation's effort to send and support, one

can

also help through direct support

CONCLUSION

1. Here are "**The Principles Of Evangelism**" we have gleaned so far from our Lord's instructions in giving "The Limited Commission"...
 - a. Utilize the power of synergy
 - b. Employ the practice of specialization
 - c. Proclaim the word of God
 - d. Offer our services freely
 - e. Support those willing to work
2. As we saw, these principles were later employed by the early church...
 - a. Which may help explain the rapid spread of the gospel in the first century
 - b. Which can still be useful to the Lord's church today
 - Could it be that failure to implement any of these may be reasons why the church is not growing like it did then?

In our next lesson, we shall examine yet another five principles of evangelism from the instructions Jesus gave to His apostles...

Principles Of Evangelism - II

Matthew 10:11-42

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous study, we began looking at the instructions Jesus gave in charging His apostles with “The Limited Commission”...
 - a. In which He sent them to preach to the house of Israel - **Mt 10:5-10**
 - b. To prepare the way for Jesus to come to them personally - cf. **Mt 10:23; 11:1; Lk 10:1**
2. In that study, we observed five “**Principles Of Evangelism**”...
 - a. Utilize the power of synergy
 - b. Employ the practice of specialization
 - c. Proclaim the word of God
 - d. Offer our services freely
 - e. Support those willing to work
 - Principles that were utilized by the early church with great success, and worthy of our emulation today
3. In this study, we shall consider the rest of Jesus words in giving “**The Limited Commission**”...
 - a. Gleaning at least five more “**Principles of Evangelism**”
 - b. Noticing principles applied by the early church and applicable today as well

[Beginning with **Mt 10:11-15**, we find Jesus telling His apostles...]

I. BE SELECTIVE

A. THE APOSTLES WERE TO FOCUS ON THOSE WHO WERE “WORTHY”...

1. Those who were both hospitable and willing to listen - **Mt 10:11-13**
2. But they were to “shake off the dust from your feet” when leaving a city that would not receive them or hear their words - **Mt 10:14**
3. It would be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for such people - **Mt 10:15**

B. THIS ILLUSTRATES THE NEED TO BE SELECTIVE...

1. We are not to “cast your pearls before swine” - **Mt 7:6**
2. People judge themselves unworthy of the gospel by their lack of interest
 - a. Paul was willing to preach again if people were interested- **Ac 13:42-44**
 - b. But when people rejected the gospel, he turned elsewhere - **Ac 13:45-46**

C. MAKING APPLICATION TODAY...

1. We are to preach the gospel to every creature - **Mk 16:15**
 - a. But once people display lack of interest, we are not obligated to keep trying
 - b. Rather than “cast our pearls” before those who don’t appreciate it, we should move on to someone else
2. Admittedly, there is room for judgment...
 - a. As to how long we try to reach someone before going on

- b. Some may not show much interest at first, but do later on
- 3. But at some point, there may be other souls who need the gospel more than our friends, family and neighbors who show no interest

[Another principle of evangelism we do well to remember is to...]

II. ANTICIPATE PERSECUTION

A. THE APOSTLES WERE TOLD TO EXPECT PERSECUTION...

- 1. Jesus was sending them as sheep in the midst of wolves - **Mt 10:16**
- 2. He gave them a picture of what to expect - **Mt 10:17-23**
- 3. As His disciples, they should expect similar treatment to what He had received - **Mt 10:24-25**

B. THIS ILLUSTRATES THE NEED TO ANTICIPATE PERSECUTION...

- 1. Jesus later reminded His apostles they would be hated by the world - **Jn 15:18-20**
- 2. The apostles would later tell the disciples of persecution to come - **Ac 14:22; 1 Th 3:4; 2 Ti 3:12**
- 3. But the disciples were prepared to react in the proper way
 - a. To rejoice that they were worthy to suffer in Christ's name - **Mt 5:10-12**
 - b. To rejoice knowing that trials can make them better - **Ro 5:3-5**

C. MAKING APPLICATION TODAY...

- 1. Don't expect everyone to gladly receive your message of salvation in Christ
- 2. Rather, expect some to be offended and angry...
 - a. For many don't like to be told they are sinners, in need of salvation
 - b. They may become defensive when told repentance is necessary
 - c. You might lose friends, be ostracized, and in some places, physically abused
- 3. But being forewarned is forearmed, able to respond in the proper way
 - a. Blessing those who curse you, praying for those who despise you - **Mt 5:44**
 - b. Rejoicing for the good that can come out of persecution - **Ja 1:2-4**

[Evangelism is often short-circuited when met with resistance; anticipating persecution is an important principle that will help us to not lose heart. Closely related to this is another principle of evangelism...]

III. FEAR GOD, NOT MAN

A. THE APOSTLES WERE TOLD WHOM TO FEAR...

- 1. They were not to fear those who would resist them - **Mt 10:26-27**
- 2. They were not to fear those who could kill them - **Mt 10:28**
- 3. They were to fear God if they desired to be free from the fear of men
 - a. For God had the power to destroy both body and soul - **Mt 10:28**
 - b. But God also knew everything about them and valued them highly - **Mt 10:29-31**
- 4. Confessing Jesus before men would ensure being confessed before God - **Mt 10:32-33**

B. THIS ILLUSTRATES THE NEED TO BE MORE CONCERNED WITH WHAT GOD THINKS...

- 1. Fear of rejection often hinders many evangelistic efforts
 - a. We want to be accepted by friends, family, neighbors

- b. We don't to be turned away from them
 - But they are not the ones who will judge us in the last day!
- 2. Paul reminds us that pleasing God rather than man is what makes one a servant of Christ
 - **Ga 1:10**

C. MAKING APPLICATION TODAY...

- 1. Christians need to have a healthy reverence for God - cf. **Ph 2:12**
- 2. When we revere God more than we fear man, the fear of rejection will not hinder our efforts to teach others
 - a. We will stop trying to please others, and seek to please God!
 - b. We will seek His favor, rather than the favor of men
- 3. With the proper fear of God, we will not rest until we are doing something in the area of evangelism, for that is His will for us!

[Fearing God over fearing men is a matter of keeping our priorities straight. Along the same vein is the next principle of evangelism that Jesus taught...]

IV. PUT THE LORD FIRST

A. THE APOSTLES WERE TOLD HOW THE LORD MUST COME FIRST...

- 1. Jesus described the kind of conflicts that would often arise - **Mt 10:34-36**
 - a. His coming and the gospel of the kingdom would often divide family members
 - b. The members of one's own household might become enemies
- 2. To be worthy, they must love Him more than family and self - **Mt 10:37-39**
 - a. They must be willing to take up their cross and follow Him
 - b. They must be willing to lose their life in service to Him to truly find their life

B. THIS ILLUSTRATES THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP...

- 1. A cost Jesus encouraged all to count before becoming His disciples - **Lk 14:25-33**
- 2. A cost Jesus reminded one disciple who sought to put family first - **Mt 8:21-22**

C. MAKING APPLICATION TODAY...

- 1. Service to God is hindered by allowing family and personal interests to come first
 - a. You see this in how some put relatives and family before the church
 - b. We have a responsibility to our families (**1 Ti 5:8**), but we must not let that get in the way of serving Jesus
- 2. Evangelism, especially foreign evangelism, will never be what it should be as long as we allow family and personal considerations hold us back
 - a. Think of the early Christians, who "went everywhere preaching the word" - **Ac 8:4**
 - b. Likely there were children, parents, and others saying "Don't go"; but neither persecution nor family ties kept them from spreading the Word!

[We come to the last point, which ties in with the last point of the previous lesson (**Support those willing to work**)...]

V. SUPPORTERS SHARE IN THE REWARD

A. THIS WOULD ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO RECEIVED THE APOSTLES...

- 1. For in receiving them, they receive Christ and God who sent Him - **Mt 10:40**

2. They would share in the rewards of the prophets and righteous men they supported - **Mt 10:41**
3. Even a cup of cold water would not go unnoticed - **Mt 10:42**

B. THIS ILLUSTRATES THE PRINCIPLE ESTABLISHED BY DAVID...

1. Back when David and his men were pursuing the Amalekites - **1 Sam 30:9-10,18-25**
 - a. When some had to be left with the supplies while others fought the enemy
 - b. David decreed that all should share alike - both those at the base, and those at the front
2. Thus those who support have fellowship in both the work and reward of those they support!

C. MAKING APPLICATION TODAY...

1. Never underestimate the role of supporting those who go (“How shall they preach unless they are sent?”) - cf. **Ro 10:14-15**
2. If you cannot go or teach yourself, then do what you can to support those who can
3. Take comfort in knowing:
 - a. It is Christ you are serving, not just a servant of Christ!
 - b. You can receive a prophet’s reward without necessarily being a prophet!

CONCLUSION

1. In summation, then, the ten **“Principles Of Evangelism”** found in “The Limited Commission”...
 - a. Utilize the power of synergy
 - b. Employ the practice of specialization
 - c. Proclaim the word of God
 - d. Offer our services freely
 - e. Support those willing to work
 - f. Be selective
 - g. Anticipate persecution
 - h. Fear God, not man
 - i. Put the Lord first
 - j. Supporters share in the reward
2. As we attempt to fulfill **“The Great Commission” (Mt 28:19)**...
 - a. Can we improve on the principles taught by our Savior?
 - b. Did not the early Christians implement them as they went forth with the gospel?

As preachers or simply disciples, as churches or as individuals, success in evangelism can only be increased by remembering what our Lord told His twelve apostles before He sent them out to preach the good news of the kingdom...

Greater Than John The Baptist?

Matthew 11:11

INTRODUCTION

1. At the height of His earthly ministry, Jesus was approached by two disciples of John the Baptist - **Mt 11:1-6**
 - a. John was in prison, and had sent the two disciples to Jesus
 - b. Perhaps troubled by his own imprisonment, he wanted affirmation that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Coming One
 - c. Jesus pointed to His works, and spoke of the blessedness of those not offended by Him
2. Jesus used this opportunity to tell the multitudes about John the Baptist - **Mt 11:7-10**
 - a. That he was not some easily shaken reed or man in soft clothing, but a prophet
 - b. Indeed, he was the prophet foretold by Isaiah and Malachi - **Isa 40:3; Mal 3:1; 4:5**
3. But then Jesus made two remarkable statements - **Mt 11:11**
 - a. First, that no one had been greater than John the Baptist
 - b. Second, that one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he!
4. It is the second statement that has perplexed many...
 - a. For the kingdom of heaven was the church that was about to be established
 - b. And in the church there are many who do not seem to measure up to a man like John!
 - How can any of us be greater than he?

[When we know the answer, it should fill us with humility and gratitude, and encourage us to greater dedication in our service to the Lord. Before we consider the answer, let's review...]

I. THE GREATNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

A. HE WAS GREAT AS A MAN...

1. Enduring a life of austerity, with voluntary simplicity - **Lk 1:80; Mt 3:4**
2. He showed **courage** before king Herod, condemning his unlawful marriage - **Mt 14:3-4**
3. He possessed **humility**, showing deference at the height of his own ministry to a New Comer - **Jn 1:19-37; 3:22-30**

B. HE WAS GREAT AS A PROPHET...

1. His influence brought people throughout Judea into the desert - **Mt 3:1-2,5**
2. They were moved to be baptized and confess their sins - **Mt 6:6**
3. Yet He did not weaken his message to accommodate his audience - **Mt 6:7-8**

C. HE WAS GREAT IN PREPARING THE WAY FOR CHRIST...

1. Such was his particular mission - **Mt 3:3; 11:9-10**
2. And when Jesus came, he pointed people to Him - **Jn 1:29,34-36; 3:30,36**
 - a. "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"
 - b. "I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."
 - c. "He must increase, but I must decrease."

- d. “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life...”

[In light of his mission, and the faithful manner in which he carried it out, no one had arisen greater than John (not even Moses, Elijah, etc., though they might be consider “as great as” John). But again, Jesus says that the least in the kingdom is “greater” than John. How can that be...?]

II. THE GREATNESS OF THOSE IN THE KINGDOM

A. WE ENJOY GREATER KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST...

1. John’s limited knowledge of Christ is implied by his question - **Mt 11:2-3**
 - a. He had not seen what Jesus’ disciples had seen
 - b. He had not heard what Jesus’ disciples had heard - cf. **Mt 13:16-17**
 2. Through the further teaching of Christ and His apostles...
 - a. We know the wonderful story of the cross!
 - b. We know the nature of the kingdom, its establishment, its future glory!
 - c. We know “many things” which even Jesus Himself had not taught His apostles until after the Holy Spirit was sent! - cf. **Jn 16:12-13**
- **Even “he who is least in the kingdom” knows things about Jesus and His church that John did not know!**

B. WE ENJOY GREATER A GREATER STATION IN THIS LIFE...

1. John was not in the kingdom of heaven (or church) during his life
 - a. He proclaimed it was “at hand” - **Mt 3:1-2**
 - b. Jesus and His apostles were still preaching it as being “at hand” - **Mt 10:7**
 - c. Jesus would later speaking of the building of His church - **Mt 16:18**
 2. But with the establishment of the church, those who are in it...
 - a. Have been translated into the kingdom of God’s Son - **Co 1:13**; cf. **Re 1:9**
 - b. Have been made a royal priesthood and holy nation - **1 Pe 2:9**
- **John lived under the Old Covenant; even “he who is least in the kingdom” lives under**

C. WE ENJOY GREATER PRIVILEGES...

1. John certainly enjoyed wonderful privileges
 - a. He was filled with the Spirit from his mother’s womb - **Lk 1:15**
 - b. Who certainly helped him fulfill his mission
2. But Jesus offers things which John did not have; for example...
 - a. A gift of the Spirit that was not given until after Jesus was glorified - **Jn 7:37-39**
 - 1) Something other than inspiration or miraculous powers, for many had enjoyed that before Jesus was glorified (ascended to heaven)
 - 2) Due to the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost, all who are saved experience “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” - **Ti 3:5-7**
 - 3) John was born of woman, those in the kingdom are “born of the Spirit”! - **Jn 3:5**
 - a) We therefore receive “the gift of the Spirit” - **Ac 2:38**
 - b) A gift that helps deliver one from the power of sin - cf. **Ro 8:11-13**
 - c) A gift not enjoyed by those under the Old Covenant - cf. **Ro 7:14-8:4**
 - b. The fellowship of the church, the body of Christ - **Ro 12:5**
 - 1) Remember that John spent his life in the desert, and then in prison
 - 2) He did not enjoy the blessings of fellowship available to the “least” in the kingdom
 - 3) As promised by Jesus, we have a “hundred-fold” family members in this life, something John never had - **Mk 10:28-30**

- **Many other privileges peculiar to the New Covenant could be mentioned, all of which are enjoyed today by “he who is least in the kingdom”!**

CONCLUSION

1. In at least three ways, then, we are “greater” than John the Baptist...
 - a. In our knowledge of Jesus Christ
 - b. In our station of life by being in Christ
 - c. In our privileges offered by Jesus Christ

2. **J. W. McGarvey:** “We find from this passage that all true greatness arises from association, relation and contact with Jesus Christ” (**The Fourfold Gospel**)
 - a. As the forerunner of Christ, John was greater than any other teacher, prophet, priest, lawgiver, and king
 - b. As the beneficiaries of Christ, even the least of those in His kingdom are greater than he

3. Does this not fill us with humility, gratitude, and a desire to greater service?
 - a. That Jesus would bestow such great blessings upon us?
 - b. That we ought to be more dedicated in our service to Christ?
 - 1) Producing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives
 - 2) Nurturing and enjoying the fellowship of the family of God
 - 3) Proclaiming the gospel of Christ and the kingdom in its fullness

If John was so faithful in that which is less, should we not be more diligent when we have that which is more?

“For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” (Lk 12:48)

The Savior's Tender Invitation

Matthew 11:28-30

INTRODUCTION

1. In the text for our study today, we find a wonderful invitation extended by Jesus...

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Mt 11:28-30)

2. From heaven Jesus still offers this tender invitation; but do we really understand and appreciate...
 - a. To whom Jesus extends this invitation?
 - b. What He offers to those who will accept it?
 - c. What He expects from those who desire to respond?
 - d. The true ease of accepting this invitation?

[These are some of the questions we shall consider as we examine what has been called “**The Savior’s Tender Invitation**”...]

I. TO WHOM DOES JESUS EXTEND THIS INVITATION?

A. “ALL YOU WHO LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN...”

1. To those who are burdened by sin
 - a. A burden which separates one from God - cf. **Isa 59:1-2**
 - b. A burden with terrible side effects
 - 1) A lack of inner peace - **Isa 48:22**
 - 2) Instead, one is burdened with anxiety, depression, fear and doubt
 - 3) Rightly so, in view of the ultimate consequence of sin (spiritual death) - **Ro 6:23a**
2. This invitation, then, is really for everyone!
 - a. For all are sinners! - **Ro 3:23,10**
 - b. And as such are in bondage to sin and its heavy burden - **Jn 8:34**

B. SADLY, MANY ARE TOO PROUD TO ADMIT THEIR BURDEN...

1. That they are sinners
2. That they are enslaved by sin and its burden
3. That they need Divine help to freed from the burden of sin

[If you are not too proud to face the fact that you are a sinner and need Divine help, then “**The Savior’s Tender Invitation**” is especially designed for you! But perhaps you wonder...]

II. WHAT IS JESUS OFFERING?

A. “I WILL GIVE YOU REST...YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS”

1. Jesus is offering rest for our souls!
2. Souls which have been burdened by:
 - a. The **guilt of sin**, which separates from God (legal guilt)

- b. The **side effects of sin**, such as anxiety, depression, fear and doubt (emotional guilt)

B. JESUS OFFERS REST...

1. Which includes **a removal of the guilt of sin!**
 - a. For by God's own love and grace, forgiveness of sin is now possible through Jesus - cf. **Ro 5:8-9; 1 Jn 4:10; Ep 1:7**
 - b. Through His own blood, Jesus frees us from the condemnation of sin - **Ro 8:1**
2. Which includes **a removal of the side effects of sin!**
 - a. To have true rest for our souls, we need more than just forgiveness
 - 1) For even those forgiven may be plagued by the side effects of sin
 - 2) Having lived so long under the burden of sin, it may not be easy to lay aside those feelings which often accompany sin (e.g., anxiety, fear, doubt)
 - b. Jesus certainly provides what our souls need...
 - 1) To remove **anxiety**, Jesus offers **peace to calm the troubled heart**
 - a) A peace unlike any that the world might give - **Jn 14:27**
 - b) A peace stronger than any tribulation the world might bring - **Jn 16:33**
 - c) A peace which guards our hearts and minds, and "surpasses all understanding" - **Ph 4:7**
 - 2) To remove **depression**, Jesus offers **joy to lift our spirits**
 - a) The same joy Jesus Himself had - **Jn 15:11**
 - b) A joy later described as "inexpressible" - **1 Pe 1:8**
 - 3) To remove **fear**, Jesus offers **love which casts out fear** - **1 Jn 4:18**
 - a) The same love which exists between the Father and the Son - **Jn 15:9**
 - b) A love which "passes knowledge" - **Ep 3:19**
 - 4) To remove doubt, Jesus offers **hope for facing the future**
 - a) By assuring us of eternal life - **Jn 11:25**
 - b) By promising eternal rest to those who die in the Lord - **Re 14:13**

[I have not exhausted all that pertains to the wonderful rest Jesus offers, but it is...

- ◆ A rest from the burden of sin's guilt, and a rest from the burden of sin's side effects!
- ◆ A rest for our burdened souls now, and eternal rest for our souls when we die!

Incidentally, even physical burdens are made lighter by coming to Jesus, because the soul is made stronger to bear them! This sounds wonderful, but...]

III. WHAT DOES JESUS EXPECT OF THOSE WHO WISH TO RESPOND?

A. "COME TO ME..."

1. This is easy, even though Jesus is "King of kings and Lord of lords"
2. For as He says, "I am gentle and lowly in heart"
 - a. He is so gentle, children felt comfortable in His presence - cf. **Mt 18:2**
 - b. He is so lowly in heart, the common people heard Him gladly - cf. **Mk 12:37**
 - c. As prophesied, Jesus would be tender and sensitive to our needs ("A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench" - **Isa 42:3; Mt 12:20**)

B. "TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU..."

1. "In Jewish literature a 'yoke' represents the sum-total of obligations which, according to the teaching of the rabbis, a person must take upon himself." - **Hendriksen**

2. Jesus is therefore expecting those who desire the rest He offers to:
 - a. Accept His teachings
 - b. Accept whatever obligations He would lay upon you

C. “...AND LEARN FROM ME”

1. This is how we learn what obligations He would place upon us
2. We must be willing to listen to Him, and do whatever He says - cf. **Lk 6:46-49**

[In essence, “**The Savior’s Tender Invitation**” is a call to discipleship: to commit your life as a disciple of Jesus, committed to learning from Him and accepting the obligations He places upon you (i.e., “His yoke”). This might prompt one to ask...]

IV. HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO ACCEPT THIS INVITATION?

A. AS JESUS TAUGHT ELSEWHERE, IT DOES REQUIRE...

1. That we observe all that He commanded - **Mt 28:19-20**
2. That we abide in His doctrine (teaching) - **Jn 8:31**

B. BUT AS STATED HERE, “MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT...”

1. John, who was a disciple for over fifty years, said: “His commandments are not grievous” - **1 Jn 5:3**
2. What helps lighten our burden is the strength Jesus Himself gives - **Ph 2:12-13; 4:13**
 -- Certainly the burden Jesus places upon us is lighter than the burden sin lays upon us!

CONCLUSION

1. Do you desire the rest for your soul that is offered by “**The Savior’s Tender Invitation**”...?
 - a. Then come to Jesus in full obedience to His gospel
 - b. Commit to becoming His disciple, learning from Him all that He commanded
2. As suggested in **Mt 28:19-20**, this life of discipleship begins with baptism...
 - a. For in baptism we put on Christ - **Ga 3:27**
 - b. For in baptism we rise to walk in newness of life - **Ro 6:3-4**

As one rises from the watery grave of baptism, they are freed from the burden of sin through the precious blood of Christ. As they continue to observe all that He commanded, their burden becomes even lighter as they apply to their lives the wisdom Jesus taught.

Have you accepted the yoke of Jesus? Are you living under that yoke?

Every Idle Word

Matthew 12:36-37

INTRODUCTION

1. The standards of God are much different than that of the world - cf. **Isa 55:8,9**
2. A striking example of this difference is in regards to one's speech...
 - a. The world thinks lightly of certain kinds of speech (e.g., allowing profane speech in the name of free speech)
 - b. Whereas Jesus teaches us to take all speech seriously - **Mt 12:36-37**
3. Speech is important, for it reveals the heart of man...
 - a. Out of the abundance of heart the mouth speaks - **Mt 12:34**
 - b. Thus speech reveals the sort of treasure stored in the heart of man - **Mt 12:35**
4. For this reason...
 - a. Our very words will be taken into account on the day of judgment!
 - b. We ought to give careful thought concerning the words we use
 - c. It is imperative that our speech be in keeping with God's standard and not the world's!

[In this lesson, we shall review what the Bible teaches concerning acceptable and unacceptable speech. We begin by cataloging some types of speech that are condemned in the Scriptures...]

I. IDLE WORDS FOR WHICH WE SHALL BE JUDGED

A. SOME OBVIOUS EXAMPLES OF UNACCEPTABLE SPEECH...

1. Using the Lord's name in vain - **Exo 20:7**
 - a. That is, without an attitude of sincere reverence
 - b. One can be guilty of this in two ways:
 - 1) Using the Lord's name in swearing or cursing
 - 2) Using vain repetitions of His name
 - c. Applies also to the name of Jesus, for His name is to be held in honor - **Ph 2:9-11**
2. Words that are evil - cf. **1 Pe 3:10**
 - a. Lying words, or those that cause trouble among brethren - **Pro 6:16-19**
 - b. Deceitful words - **Ro 16:18**
 - c. Filthy language - **Ep 5:4**

B. OTHER EXAMPLES OF UNACCEPTABLE SPEECH...

1. The overuse of words - **Ja 1:26; Pro 10:19; 13:3**
2. Words spoken in haste - **Pro 29:20; cf. Ja 1:19**
3. Speaking evil of others
 - a. Of those in authority - **Exo 22:28; Jude 8**
 - b. Of those around us - **Mt 5:21-22**
 - Such speech is known as "reviling", and is clearly condemned - **1 Co 6:9-10**
4. Flattery - **Psa 12:1-4; cf. Ro 16:18**
5. Rash oaths - **Mt 5:33-37; Ja 5:12**

6. Any unwholesome word - cf. **Ep 4:29**
 - a. Including euphemisms (less offensive expressions substituted for those more offensive)
 - b. Some examples of euphemisms (darn, shoot, gosh, gee)
 - c. What is wrong with such expressions?
 - 1) They mean the same thing as the more offensive words
 - 2) It is the same wrongful emotions behind the euphemism or its equivalent
 - 3) Reflecting attitudes contrary to the spirit of Christ - **Ep 4:31-32; Co 3:8-15**

[Often our speech is one of habit...but such habits reflect “the abundance of the heart”, i.e., what has been allowed to reside in the heart and reveal the true nature of our hearts when so used. As we attempt to store up “good treasure” in our heart (cf. **Mt 12:35**), here are...]

II. SOME PRINCIPLES OF ACCEPTABLE SPEECH

A. TWO BASIC GUIDELINES...

1. Our speech should lead to **edification** - **Ep 4:29**
 - a. That which encourages and builds up
 - b. That which extends grace to others
 - 1) E.g., words which cool down heated conversations - **Pro 15:1**
 - 2) E.g., words that are a delight to those who hear - **Pro 15:4,23; 25:11**
2. Our speech should be characterized with **thankfulness** - **Ep 5:3-4**
 - a. An attitude becoming of saints - cf. **Co 1:12; 2:7; 3:15,17; 4:2**
 - b. While murmuring and complaining is not becoming - cf. **Ph 2:14-15**

B. SUCH SPEECH REQUIRES FORETHOUGHT...

1. The righteous will give careful thought to his speech - **Pro 15:28**
2. The righteous will be concerned about what comes out of his mouth
 - a. For his speech reflects the true condition of the heart - **Mt 12:34-35; 15:17-20**
 - b. And he looks to God for help, even accepting the rebuke of others - **Psa 141:3-5**

CONCLUSION

1. It has been my purpose...
 - a. To remind us of Jesus’ words in **Mt 12:36-37**
 - b. To raise our awareness of how easy it is to sin in our speech
 - c. To remind us of the graceful speech that should proceed from our mouths
2. I hope I have stimulated your thinking to give careful consideration to God’s standard; may each of us possess the same desire as that expressed in the prayer of the Psalmist:

*“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”
(Psa 19:14)*

Condemned By Others

Matthew 12:41-42

INTRODUCTION

1. On the day of Judgment, we will all be judged by Jesus Christ...
 - a. It is before Him that we must appear - **2 Co 5:10**
 - b. It is by His words that we shall be condemned - **Jn 12:48**
2. But Jesus also spoke of some rising at the judgment and condemning others...
 - a. The men of Nineveh condemning the generation of Jews in Jesus' day - **Mt 12:41**
 - b. Likewise the Queen of the South - **Mt 12:42**
3. This makes me wonder...
 - a. Will there be some who will rise at the judgment to condemn us?
 - b. What would the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South say about us?

[Perhaps from Jesus' words in **Mt 12:41-42** we can glean some points that ought to make us think soberly about our service to God, and whether we too will be "**Condemned By Others**". Let's first notice what is said about...]

I. THE GENERATION OF JESUS' DAY

A. TO BE CONDEMNED BY THE MEN OF NINEVEH...

1. This refers to the Ninevites in Jonah's day - **Mt 12:41**
 - a. To whom Jonah was sent with a message of destruction - **Jonah 3:1-4**
 - b. Who were quick to repent at the preaching of Jonah - **Jonah 3:5-10**
2. They will rise to condemn the Jews of Jesus' day
 - a. Because the Ninevites repented...
 - 1) And they were only given 40 days
 - 2) While the Jews were given about 40 years (before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70)
 - b. Because the Jews had one greater than Jonah preach to them...
 - 1) Jonah was a reluctant prophet, who became angry when God relented of the destruction to come upon Nineveh - **Jonah 1:1-3; 3:10-4:3**
 - 2) Jesus was a compassionate prophet, who lamented over His people Israel - cf. **Mt 23:37-38 ; Lk 19:41-44**

B. TO BE CONDEMNED BY THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH...

1. This refers to the Queen of Sheba - **Mt 12:42**
 - a. Who traveled a great distance ("from the ends of the earth") to see Solomon - **1 Kin 10:1**
 - b. She brought a great caravan of spices, gold, and precious stones - **1 Kin 10:2**
 - c. Who praised God for the wisdom given to Solomon - **1 Kin 10:3-9**
 - d. Who honored Solomon with great gifts - **1 Kin 10:10**
2. She will rise to condemn the Jews of Jesus' day
 - a. Because the Queen was willing to travel...

- 1) A great distance to see Solomon
- 2) While many Jews were unwilling to follow Jesus
- b. Because the Jews had one greater than Solomon teach them...
 - 1) Solomon certainly was the wisest man of his day - **1 Kin 4:29-34**
 - 2) But Jesus possessed “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” - **Co 2:3**

[The Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba will judge the Jews of Jesus’ day because they showed **less** interest and willingness to heed even though they had a much **greater** opportunity. Again, this makes me wonder...]

II. HOW ABOUT OUR GENERATION TODAY?

A. WILL THE MEN OF NINEVEH CONDEMN US...?

- 1. They were quick to repent after hearing the one message of Jonah...
 - a. How many sermons have we heard, yet failed to repent?
 - b. They were given but forty days, how many years has God given us to repent?
 - 2. They repented when all they had was a simple message...
 - a. We have God’s full and final revelation, written and preserved for us
 - b. We have God’s word, revealed through His Son and His apostles
 - c. We have likely had the blessing of parents, teachers, preachers, and many other Christians encouraging us to live for God
- **If we do not heed the message of Jesus Christ, don’t you think the Ninevites will consider us foolish on the day of judgment?**

B. WILL THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH CONDEMN US?

- 1. She was willing to travel a great distance to hear Solomon...
 - a. Are we unwilling to travel a short distance to hear the words of Christ proclaimed?
 - b. She traveled on camels through desert for months at great risk, yet some won’t travel in air-conditioned cars for an hour or less when there is only minimal risk
 - 2. She highly valued Solomon’s wisdom, giving great gifts to him...
 - a. Do we value the wisdom of the Son of God?
 - b. Are we willing to offer the gifts of our time and energy to learn the wisdom of Christ as revealed in His word?
- **If we are unwilling to learn the will of Christ for us today, will not the Queen of Sheba consider us foolish on the day of judgment?**

C. WILL EVEN MORE RECENT GENERATIONS CONDEMN US...?

- 1. Think of those in the nineteenth century...
 - a. Who often traveled by wagon or horseback for hours to hear God’s word
 - b. Who sat on logs, in brush arbors or under tents
- 2. Think of those in the first half of the twentieth century...
 - a. Who sat in hot, un-airconditioned buildings
 - b. Who when to protracted meetings every night, often for three or more weeks
- 3. Think of those who struggled to come out of Denominationalism...
 - a. Studying God’s Word carefully to learn the simplicity of New Testament Christianity
 - b. Often making the difficult decision to leave family and friends to follow the way of

Christ

- **If we balk at attending services regularly, taking advantages of gospel meetings and Bible studies offered in nice, comfortable buildings, will not those who preceded us think us foolish on the day of judgment?**

CONCLUSION

1. As Jesus said to His disciples on another occasion:

“But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.” (Mt 13:17)

2. Indeed, we are richly blessed...
 - a. We have the message of salvation offered by One greater than Jonah
 - b. We have the wisdom of God taught by One greater than Solomon-- **Don't you think that the Ninevites and the Queen of the South would have loved to have what we enjoy today?**

3. Don't forget the maxim:

“For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” (Lk 12:48)

Unless we wish to be **“Condemned By Others”** on the day of judgment, let us utilize the blessings given to us through Christ, and expend whatever effort necessary to learn and heed His wonderful message!

The Danger Of An Empty Home

Matthew 12:43-45

INTRODUCTION

1. In the text for our study (**Mt 12:43-45**), Jesus was describing the spiritual condition of the generation of His day...
 - a. One already described as “evil and adulterous” - cf. **Mt 12:38-39**
 - b. One that would be condemned by the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba in the day of judgment - cf. **Mt 12:41-42**
 - c. One He now described as “this wicked generation” - **Mt 12:45**
2. Using the example of demon possession, Jesus warned it is not enough to go through an initial period of repentance and removal of sin...
 - a. Unless reformation continues and something positive is put in place...
 - b. ...the end might prove worse than the beginning!
3. Such had been the case with the Jews of Jesus’ day...
 - a. Many had repented at the preaching of John the Baptist - **Mt 3:5-6**
 - b. Yet they eventually rejected Jesus and called for His crucifixion - **Mt 27:20-26**
 - For them “the last state” was truly “worse than the first” - **Mt 12:45**

[There is an important lesson to be gleaned that applies to Christians as well. From what we learn here and elsewhere in the Scriptures, we need to be aware of...]

I. THE DANGER OF AN EMPTY HOME

A. OUR HEART IS LIKE A HOME...

1. In it can reside things that produce much harm - cf. **Mt 15:19**
2. But it can also be the source for much good - cf. **Mt 12:35a**

B. WHEN WE COME TO CHRIST, OUR HOME IS CLEANSED...

1. For our heart is cleansed - cf. **He 10:22; Ac 15:8-9**
2. Our conscience is purged from dead works to serve God - **He 9:14**

C. WE ARE EXPECTED TO “FILL” OUR HOME...

1. Indeed, God gives us His Spirit to dwell in our hearts - **Ga 4:6**
2. Through faith Christ Himself is to dwell in our hearts - cf. **Ep 3:17**
3. God’s peace and grace are to fill our hearts - **Co 3:16-17**
4. Even God’s law is to be written in our hearts - **He 8:10**

D. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DO NOT “FILL” OUR HOME...

1. Remember the maxim: “Nature abhors a vacuum”
 - a. If we do not make the effort to fill our home with good things
 - b. Then evil things are likely to return, and with a vengeance!
2. Consider the example of the Corinthians
 - a. They had been washed, sanctified, and justified - **1 Co 6:11**

- b. Yet later they were engaged in sinful conduct once again - **2 Co 12:20-21**
- 3. Consider the example of the false teachers mentioned by Peter...
 - a. They had been bought by the Lord, and escaped the pollutions of the world through Jesus Christ - **2 Pe 2:1,20**
 - b. But they had become entangled again - **2 Pe 2:20**
 - c. For them, “the latter end is worse for them than the beginning” - **2 Pe 2:20-22**

E. HOW THINGS CAN BECOME WORSE THAN AT THE FIRST...

- 1. In the case of the false teachers, they had...
 - a. Forsaken the right way - **2 Pe 2:15**
 - b. Eyes full of adultery, hearts trained in covetousness - **2 Pe 2:14**
 - c. Become “cursed children”, “brute beasts” - **2 Pe 2:14,13**
 - d. Even denied the Lord who bought them - **2 Pe 2:1**
 - 2. In our case...
 - a. Our hearts can become “hardened” - cf. **He 3:12-13**
 - 1) Before, the gospel had touched our hearts, moving us to repentance
 - 2) But once hardened, our hearts might not be willing to listen - cf. **Mt 13:15**
 - b. We can become so hardened through willful sin that we...
 - 1) Trample the Son of God underfoot
 - 2) Count the blood of the covenant a common thing
 - 3) Insult the Spirit of grace - cf. **He 10:26-29**
 - c. We can even reach the point...
 - 1) Where it become impossible to be renewed again to repentance
 - 2) Where we are crucifying again the Son of God and putting Him to open shame - cf. **He 6:4-7**
- In such a case, truly: “The last state of that man is worse than the first”!

[How important it is, then, that we do not let the home of our heart remain empty and thus invite worldly things to take up residence. To avoid this, here are some thoughts on...]

II. FILLING THE HOME OF YOUR HEART

A. IN PRINCIPLE...

- 1. Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts - **1 Pe 3:15**
 - a. The word “sanctify” means to “set apart”
 - b. Set a special place in your heart for God as the Ruler of your life
 - 2. Be selective as to what goes into your mind
 - a. Set your mind on things above - **Co 3:1-2**
 - b. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly - **Co 3:16**
 - c. Follow the example of David - cf. **Psa 101:3-4**
 - d. Think upon things that are good and wholesome - **Ph 4:8**
- Remember, transformation of character begins with renewing the mind - **Ro 12:1-2**

B. IN PRACTICE...

- 1. **Utilize every opportunity to study God’s word** - cf. **1 Pe 2:1-2**
 - a. Attend all services of the church
 - b. Participate in the Bible study programs that are offered
 - c. Read your Bible daily - **Psa 1:1-6**
- 2. **Fill your heart with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs...**

- a. For this is how you:
 - 1) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly - **Co 3:16**
 - 2) Allow yourself to be filled with the Spirit - **Ep 5:18-19**
- b. Sing at church, at home, in the car; sing alone and with others
3. **Let your mind dwell on things that are worthy of praise and virtue** - cf. **Ph 4:8**
 - a. Be selective about what you watch on television and in the movies
 - b. Choose your books, periodicals, magazines, etc., carefully
4. **Choose your friends carefully** - cf. **1 Co 15:33**
 - a. They will either help you to be strong or hinder your efforts - **Pr 13:20**
 - b. We cannot have communion with darkness and expect the light of God to dwell in us!
- cf. **2 Co 6:14-7:1**

CONCLUSION

1. What is the condition of your “home” (heart)...?
 - a. Are you are filling your “home” things that are good?
 - b. If not, then your heart becomes an abode for every evil thing
...and the condition of your heart may become seven times worse than before!
2. Have you experienced the initial cleansing of your “home” (heart)...?
 - a. Have you been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, so you are washed, justified, and sanctified?
 - b. If so, wonderful; but don’t be deceived into thinking you do not need to be concerned about filling that dwelling with the presence of God and all that is good!
...or it may one day be said of you: “the last state of that man is worse than the first”

If you have never been cleansed by the blood of Christ, then may these words spoken to Paul at his conversion move you to respond:

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Ac 22:16)

The Family Of Jesus

Matthew 12:46-50

INTRODUCTION

1. A wonderful blessing is that of having a family...
 - a. A source of love and acceptance
 - b. A stronghold of support and encouragement

2. But we are not limited to the blessings of a physical family...
 - a. Jesus hinted at the existence of an extended family in **Mk 10:28-30**
 - 1) A benefit of leaving all to follow Him
 - 2) Even if it meant leaving one's physical family
 - b. He used another opportunity to describe that family in **Mt 12:46-50**
 - 1) As His physical family sought to speak to Him
 - 2) He described those who made up His "spiritual" family

3. In this study, I would like for us to...
 - a. Review what we know about "**The Family Of Jesus**" (both physical and spiritual)
 - b. Remind ourselves of the wonderful family we have in Jesus Christ

[Let's start by reviewing what we know about...]

I. HIS PHYSICAL FAMILY

A. HIS MOTHER, MARY...

1. A woman worthy of high esteem
 - a. As praised by the angel Gabriel:
 - 1) "highly favored one...blessed are you among women" - **Lk 1:28**
 - 2) "you have found favor with God" - **Lk 1:30**
 - b. As praised by her cousin Elizabeth:
 - 1) "blessed are you among women" - **Lk 1:42**
 - 2) "Blessed is she who believed" - **Lk 1:45**
 - c. As she came to realize: "...henceforth all generations will call me blessed." - **Lk 1:48**
2. A mother of several children
 - a. As implied in **Mt 1:25**
 - 1) Joseph did not "know" (a euphemism for sexual relations) with her "until" the birth of Jesus
 - 2) Jesus was her "firstborn Son", the term firstborn implying there were more
 - b. As explicitly stated in **Mt 12:46-47; 13:54-56**
 - 1) He had "brothers" and "sisters", the brothers being named
 - 2) There is no indication in Scripture that these were cousins, or children of Joseph by a previous marriage
3. A mother who respected her Son
 - a. She treasured His sayings in her heart - **Lk 2:48-51**
 - b. She respected His authority - **Jn 2:5**
 - c. She followed Him to the cross - **Jn 19:25**

- d. She continued with the disciples after His ascension - **Ac 1:14** (the last time she is mentioned in the Scriptures)
- She was the “only” person who really knew the identity of Jesus; that she let her Son die on the cross is evidence that He was truly the Son of God!

B. HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS...

1. Mentioned in **Mt 13:55-56**
 - a. His brothers were James, Joses, Simon and Judas
 - b. He had at least two sisters
2. His brothers (and likely His sisters) did not believe in Him at first
 - a. They even challenged Him on one occasion - **Jn 7:2-5**
 - b. They thought Him crazy on another occasion - cf. **Mk 3:21**
3. Yet after His resurrection they came to believe
 - a. He appeared to James - **1 Co 15:7**
 - b. They continued with the disciples - **Ac 1:14**
 - c. His brother James:
 - 1) Became a prominent leader of the church in Jerusalem - **Ga 1:19; 2:9; Ac 15:6-21; 21:18-25**
 - 2) Is likely the author of The Epistle of James
 - 3) Is said to have been martyred by being thrown off the pinnacle of the temple
 - d. His brother Judas is considered by many as the author of The Epistle of Jude
 - e. His brothers evidently were married and traveled about teaching - cf. **1 Co 9:5**
- The conversion of His physical brothers who were at first skeptical is additional evidence supporting the claim of Jesus as the Son of God

[It must have been a wonderful privilege to be part of Jesus’ physical family, especially after they came to believe in Him. But according to our text (**Mt 12:46-50**), anyone can become a part of that family which meant the most to Jesus...]

II. HIS SPIRITUAL FAMILY

A. HIS DISCIPLES...

1. Jesus used this opportunity to identify the disciples as His true family - **Mt 12:48-49**
2. He then described anyone who “does the will of My Father in heaven” as His brother, sister, and mother - **Mt 12:50**
3. Why would Jesus identify His disciples as His true family?
 - a. Our physical families are only temporary
 - 1) Begun at birth, ending at death
 - 2) Just as death ends the marriage bond (cf. **Ro 7:2-3**), so it ends the familial tie
 - Emotionally we might resist this notion, but the fact remains the same
 - b. Physical unions do not always mean spiritual ones
 - 1) At the time Jesus spoke, His brothers did not believe in Him
 - 2) As often happens, family members do not always the same interests, the same concerns
 - 3) Jesus taught that physical relatives might not accept the truth - **Mt 10:34-37**
- Thus the true “**Family Of Jesus**” are those who do His Father’s Will

B. THE CHURCH TODAY...

1. Jesus told Peter that His disciples could have “a hundred fold” brothers, sisters, and

mothers in this lifetime - **Mk 10:28-30**

2. This is an allusion to the church, which is now “the household (family) of God” - **1 Ti 3:15**
 3. Jesus therefore offers to those willing to “do My Father’s will” the opportunity...
 - a. To be born into the family of God - cf. **1 Pe 1:22-23**
 - b. To enjoy God as our Father, Jesus as our “Elder Brother” - cf. **He 2:11-12**
 - c. To have countless thousands as brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers - cf. **1 Ti 5:1-2**
 - d. To join a “family ring” which shall never be broken!
 4. But the key is to “do the Father’s will”!
 - a. Not only to become a member of the family of Jesus
 - b. But to enter the kingdom of heaven in its future glory - **Mt 7:21-23**
 5. For it is serving God that ties us together in Christ...
 - a. Bind us together in love
 - b. Uniting us with the same purpose, goals, desires
- The church of Jesus Christ, then, is the true “**Family Of Jesus**” today, and forever!

CONCLUSION

1. Who is our true family today...?
 - a. If it is only our physical family, we are setting ourselves up for a great disappointment
 - b. If we want a family that will last for eternity, make sure that our bond is a spiritual one
 - 1) Joined together by a mutual faith in Christ
 - 2) Working together as we do the will of our Father in heaven

-- Perhaps we can have the best of both worlds, where your physical family is also part of your spiritual family!

2. What have you done for your true family lately...?
 - a. Have you gotten to know your brothers and sisters in Christ?
 - b. Are you growing in your love for them?
 - c. Are you encouraging them to do the Father’s will?

-- May the teaching of Jesus in our text remind you who is truly your family!

Are you in the family of Jesus? No matter what kind of physical family you may have been born into, you have the opportunity by God’s grace to be born into the wonderful family of God...!

The Kingdom Of Great Value

Matthew 13:44-46

INTRODUCTION

1. During His earthly ministry, the key theme of His preaching and teaching was “the kingdom of heaven”...
 - a. He began His ministry proclaiming that it was at hand - **Mt 4:17,23**
 - b. He sent His apostles on the limited commission to proclaim the same message - **Mt 10:7**
2. He taught many parables to illustrate great truths about this kingdom...
 - a. Through which He reveal many things that had previously been secret - **Mt 13:34-35**
 - b. Like the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price - **Mt 13:44-46**
3. In these two parables, Jesus illustrates the kingdom to be one of great value...
 - a. So great that one who stumbles upon it sells all to obtain it
 - b. So great that one searching for it sells all to buy it
4. In this lesson, I wish to address several questions that come to mind...
 - a. What is this “kingdom”?
 - b. Why is it considered to be of such great value?
 - c. Is it really worth it?
 - d. What will it cost us?

[Let’s begin, then, with the first question...]

I. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

A. IT INVOLVES FOUR INTERRELATED IDEAS...

1. God’s kingship, rule, or recognized sovereignty
 - a. The term “kingdom” as used by the Jews often stressed the abstract idea of rule or dominion, not a geographical area surrounded by physical boundaries
 - b. It is used this way by Jesus in **Mt 6:10** - “Your Kingdom come; Your Will be done...” (note the connection between kingdom and will)
 - Thus, the “kingdom of heaven” would involve the rule of heaven in the hearts of men
2. This rule of heaven is spiritual in nature
 - a. It is not a physical kingdom - cf. **Jn 18:36**
 - b. But one that is spiritual - cf. **Ro 14:17**
3. Its visible manifestation today is in the form of the Lord’s church
 - a. For the church is that community of souls in whose hearts God is recognized as Sovereign
 - b. That the church constitutes the kingdom of God on earth, consider:
 - 1) How the term “church” and “kingdom” were used interchangeably - **Mt 16:18**
 - 2) Comments made to those who were in the church - **Co 1:13; 1 Th 2:12**
 - 3) The description of those in the churches of Asia - **Re 1:4,6,9**
4. It has a future element as well as a present one
 - a. Its future aspect is spoken of by Jesus, Paul, Peter - **Mt 25:34; 1 Co 15:50; 2 Ti**

4:18; 2 Pe 1:10-11

- b. Peter described the coming of its future state in **2 Pe 3:10-13**

B. THE KINGDOM IS THEREFORE BOTH PRESENT AND FUTURE...

1. In the present sense...
 - a. It is found wherever the sovereignty of God is accepted in the hearts of men
 - b. It is a spiritual kingdom, for God rules in the hearts of men
 - c. Its outward manifestation today is the Lord's church
 - d. This rule or kingdom of God was **inaugurated** on the Day of Pentecost (**Ac 2**)
2. In the future sense...
 - a. The rule or kingdom of God will be **culminated** with the coming of the Lord
 - b. It will involve that "news heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells", described by Peter and John - **2 Pe 3; Re 21-22**
 - c. It will be experienced only by those in the church who are submitting to God's will today! - cf. **Mt 7:21-23; 2 Pe 3:13-14**

[Submitting to the rule of God so that we become part of His church is how one enters the kingdom of heaven, both present and future. This leads to our second question...]

II. WHAT IS THE GREAT VALUE OF THIS KINGDOM?

A. IT IS A REFUGE FROM THE POWERS OF DARKNESS... - Co 1:13

1. Outside the kingdom, one is in the kingdom of Satan! - **Ep 2:1-13**
 - a. Under his influence
 - b. Trapped in various sins
2. In the kingdom of Christ, we find deliverance and refuge
 - a. Set free from sin to serve God - **Ro 6:17-18**
 - b. God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability to bear - **1 Co 10:12-13**

B. IT IS A DOMAIN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE AND JOY... - Ro 14:17

1. Righteousness which comes through faith in Christ - **Ph 3:8-9**
2. Peace from God through prayer which surpasses understanding - **Ph 4:6-7**
3. Abiding joy in the Lord, no matter the circumstances - **Ph 4:4; 2:17-19**

C. IT IS AN UNSHAKABLE KINGDOM... - He 12:25-29

1. It will never be destroyed - **Dan 2:44**
2. Of this kingdom there will be no end - **Lk 1:33**
3. It is truly an everlasting kingdom - **2 Pe 1:10-11**

D. IT WILL BE PRESENTED TO GOD WHEN CHRIST RETURNS... - 1 Co 15:21-26

1. At that time, those who are now "sons of the kingdom" will "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" - **Mt 13:41-43**
2. From then on, those in this kingdom will dwell in the presence of God - **Re 21:1-7**

[The value of this kingdom can be seen further as we consider our third question...]

III. IS IT REALLY WORTH IT?

A. IF I COULD HAVE SOME "SPECIAL GUESTS"...

1. I would ask Stephen to say if he thought it was worth it - cf. **Ac 7:54-60**
2. I would ask the early Christians who joyfully accepted the plundering of their goods and eventually received the promise - **Ac 8:1-4; He 10:32-36**
3. I would ask the apostle Paul - **2 Ti 3:10-13; 4:6-8,18**
4. I would ask one of your loved ones, a friend or relative, who died in Christ
- I am confident that they would all say forcefully, "Yes! It is worth giving up all!"

B. IF I COULD, I WOULD HAVE JESUS...

1. Who gave up all to die on the cross - **Ph 2:5-8**
2. Who became "poor" that we might become "rich" - **2 Co 8:9**
- I am persuaded that as He showed you His pierced hands and feet, He would say with love and great urgency, "Yes! My kingdom is worth giving up all!"

[But what exactly must we give up? To put it another way...]

IV. WHAT WILL THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN COST US?

A. WE MUST PAY THE PRICE...

1. Of repentance - cf. **Mk 1:15**
2. Of being born again - cf. **Jn 3:3-5**
 - a. Involving both outward and inward submission to the will of Christ
 - b. A submission that will affect our whole life
3. Of putting the kingdom first - **Mt 6:33**
 - a. Before our riches - **Mk 10:23-25**
 - b. Before our families - **Mk 10:28-31**
 - c. Before ourselves - **Lk 9:23-26**

B. ARE WE WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE...

1. Consider the parable of the dinner - **Lk 14:15-24**
2. Are we guilty of the same?
 - a. Putting financial concerns first?
 - b. Putting family first?
3. Our actions demonstrate whether we are willing to pay the price; for example:
 - a. Our devotion to the Word of God and prayer
 - b. Our devotion to others in the church (kingdom) - **He 10:24-25; Ro 15:1-3**
 - c. Our devotion to the lost - **Co 1:28-29**

CONCLUSION

1. The kingdom is truly one of great value...
 - a. It was established through its purchase by the blood of Christ - **Ac 20:28**
 - b. Can we expect the Lord to accept anything less than our utmost devotion for the privilege of being in His eternal kingdom?
 - 1) We are admonished to walk in a manner worthy of the kingdom - **1 Th 2:10-12**
 - 2) But it may cost us greatly to be considered worthy - cf. **2 Th 1:4-5**
2. Our actions will demonstrated whether we value the greatness of this kingdom...
 - a. By whether or not we obey the gospel!
 - b. By whether or not we remain zealous and faithful in our service to the God!

I hope that in some way I have persuaded you that any price we pay is worthy of **“The Kingdom Of Great Value”**. If you are convinced that it is, and desire assistance in becoming or remaining a faithful “citizen” of the kingdom, then let us know...

The Death Of John The Baptist

Matthew 14:1-12

INTRODUCTION

1. A sad story in the Bible is that of “**The Death Of John The Baptist**”...
 - a. His imprisonment occurred near the beginning of Jesus’ ministry - **Mt 4:12**
 - b. Some time later, John sent two of his disciples to Jesus - **Mt 11:1-3**
 - c. Eventually he was beheaded by Herod - **Mt 14:1-12**
2. The sadness is tempered, though, by contrasting John and those responsible for his death...
 - a. A remarkable contrast between a godly man and a depraved family
 - b. A contrast that certainly provides several object lessons, encouraging godly living
3. In this study, we shall review what is said about “**The Death Of John The Baptist**”...
 - a. Noticing the four key persons in this narrative
 - b. Considering a few lessons and points that might be gleaned from this passage

[We begin with...]

I. THE FAITHFULNESS OF JOHN

A. JOHN PROVED TO BE A FAITHFUL PROPHET...

1. His message was a call to repentance - **Mt 3:1-2**
2. He called the religious leaders to repentance as well - **Mt 3:7-8**
3. Nor did he back away from pointing out the sins of the king - **Mt 14:3-4**
 - a. Herod had married his brother Philip’s wife, Herodias
 - b. It was an unlawful marriage, for several reasons:
 - 1) Philip was still living, making it adultery - **Ro 7:1-3**
 - 2) She was Herod’s niece, making it incest
 - 3) The Law prohibited marrying a brother’s wife - **Lev 18:16; 20:21**
4. Rather than change his message to accommodate the king, John was imprisoned

B. HIS FAITHFULNESS SHOULD INSPIRE US TODAY...

1. To be true to God’s Word, even when not politically correct
2. To proclaim God’s law on marriage, even if it angers others
 - a. God’s law on marriage goes all the way back to the creation - **Mt 19:4-8**
 - b. Christ defined the one circumstance when one may divorce and remarry - **Mt 19:9**
 - c. Therefore not all marriages are “lawful”; there may be times when we must tell one: “It is not lawful for you to have her” - **Mt 14:4**

[The faithfulness of this godly man stands out, especially when contrasted with the members of the ungodly family we now consider. Beginning with...]

II. THE SHAMELESSNESS OF SALOME

A. SALOME WAS A GIRL WITH NO SHAME...

1. Of course, she was the daughter of a shameless woman - **Mt 14:6**
2. From the Greek, Robertson describes her dance as “some kind of rapid motion...a shameful exhibition of lewd dancing” (**Robertson’s Word Pictures**)
3. She danced this way, not just before Herod, but his guests as well - **Mk 6:21-22**

B. HER SHAMELESSNESS IS OFTEN REPEATED TODAY...

1. Much modern dance is similar to the lewdness of Salome’s dancing
 - a. Designed to arouse fleshly passions
 - b. “Because of its physical appeal, dance lends itself to erotic purposes and has been practiced to these ends by both sexes.” - Encyclopedia Britannica, “The Art Of Dance”
2. Such shamelessness is condemned as lewdness (lasciviousness, licentiousness)
 - a. The Grk. word (**aselgia**) is “unbridled lust...wanton acts or manners (including) filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females”
 - b. Condemned as a work of the flesh - cf. **Ga 5:19-21**
3. Christians (esp. women) are to possess a sense of “shamefacedness” - **1 Ti 2:9** (KJV)
 - a. That is, a sense of propriety (NKJV), that which is proper
 - b. The Greek word (**aidos**) means “a sense of shame, modesty” (**Vine**)
 - c. “Aidos would always restrain a good man from an unworthy act...” (**Trench**)

[The shamelessness of Salome contributed to the death of John the Baptist. Similar lack of propriety among men and women leads to much trouble today as well. Of course, this young girl was undoubtedly influenced by her mother...]

III. THE VENGEFULNESS OF HERODIAS

A. HERODIAS WAS A VENGEFUL WOMAN...

1. She had been the subject of John’s rebuke to Herod - **Mt 14:3-4**
 - a. She had been married to Philip, Herod Antipas’ half-brother
 - b. Herod had been married to the daughter of Aretas, an Arabian king of Petraea
 - c. After Herod had been a guest in Philip’s home, he and Herodias eloped while still married to their spouses
 - d. At some point they married, for which John rebuked them - **Mk 6:17-18**
2. In her vengefulness...
 - a. She prompted Herod to imprison John - **Mk 6:17-18**
 - b. She wanted to kill John, though temporarily prevented from doing so - **Mk 6:19**
 - c. She prompted her daughter to ask for John’s head on a platter - **Mk 6:22-25**

B. SUCH VENGEFULNESS OFTEN DESTROYS LIVES TODAY...

1. Through vengeance people often resort to desperate measures
 - a. E.g., Simeon and Levi, whose vengeance killed those of Shechem - **Gen 34:1-31**
 - b. It moved Joab to kill Abner, an honorable man - **2 Sam 3:27; 1 Kin 2:29-33**
2. Vengeance led to the downfall of such people as:
 - a. Haman, who tried to kill Mordecai and the Jews - **Esther 3-7**
 - b. The Edomites and the Philistines, who took vengeance on Judah - **Eze 25:12-17**
3. Vengeance destroys families, friends, associates; hurting most those who exercise it
4. Which is why vengeance belongs to God - **Pro 24:29; Ro 12:17-19; 1 Th 5:15; 1 Pe 3:9**

[Finally, we consider the king who was manipulated like a pawn, as we look at...]

IV. THE WEAKNESS OF HEROD

A. HEROD ANTIPAS WAS A WEAK MAN...

1. Son of Herod the Great, we see his weakness manifested by:
 - a. His superstition, supposing Jesus to be John raised from the dead - **Mt 14:1-2**
 - b. His unfaithfulness, in leaving his first wife and marrying Herodias - **Mt 14:3-4**
 - c. His fear of the multitude and John himself, which prevented Herod from killing him at first - **Mt 14:5; Mk 6:20**
 - d. His manipulation by Salome and Herodias - **Mt 14:6-8**
 - e. His fear of his guests, before whom he was afraid of ridicule - **Mt 14:9**
2. His weakness eventually led to his death
 - a. For Herodias later prompted him to join her in appealing for favors from Caesar
 - b. But they were accused of high treason and banished to Lyons in Gaul, where he died in great misery (**Josephus**, Antiquities Of The Jews)

B. SUCH MORAL WEAKNESS CAN BE A PROBLEM TODAY...

1. We can be destroyed by weakness through:
 - a. Succumbing to temptation
 - b. Allowing others to pressure us in doing evil - cf. **1 Co 15:33**
2. Christians need to stand strong..
 - a. Cf. The example of young men as Joseph and Daniel - **Gen 39:1-12; Dan 1:8**
 - b. Looking to God for help and strength - **1 Co 10:13; Ep 3:16; Ph 4:13**
 - c. Seeking the approval of God, not men - **Ga 1:10**

CONCLUSION

1. In **“The Death Of John The Baptist”**, it initially appears that evil was the winner..
 - a. Herod succeeded in imprisoning and killing John
 - b. Herod and Salome succeeded in manipulating Herod and getting rid of John
2. There are times today when it seems that evil people are the ones who win in life..
 - a. People who blatantly disregard God’s law on divorce and remarriage
 - b. Young people who gain popularity through shameless conduct
3. But as revealed by the Psalmist (**Psa 73:1-28**), such apparent success is fleeting..
 - a. God will eventually bring the wicked into judgment
 - b. Sometimes judgment is received even in this life, as with the exile of Herod and Herodias
 - c. Whose shoes would you want to be in now? Herod’s? Herodias’? Salome’s?

May the faithfulness of John remind us that serving God is the only way to eternal life and happiness...!

The Danger With Traditions

Matthew 15:1-9

INTRODUCTION

1. As Jesus went about preaching and teaching, He often ran afoul of the religious leaders over the matter of keeping traditions...
 - a. E.g., plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath - **Mt 12:1-8**
 - b. E.g., healing on the Sabbath - **Mt 12:9-14**
 - c. E.g., eating with unwashed hands - **Mt 15:1-9**
2. In **Mt 15:1-9**, Jesus describes the danger of traditions at length...
 - a. How keeping them can make void the very commands of God
 - b. How keeping them can make our worship vain before God
3. Traditions are very important in some religions...
 - a. In the Roman Catholic church, tradition is place on par with God's Word
 - 1) "It is an article of faith from a decree of the Vatican Council that Tradition is a source of theological teaching distinct from Scripture, and that it is infallible. It is therefore to be received with the same internal assent of Scripture, for it is the word of God." - **Catholic Dictionary**, p. 41-42
 - 2) "Do you have to believe in Tradition? Yes, because it is the Word of God and has equal authority with the Bible." - **Catholic Catechism For Adults**, p. 11
 - b. Just about every Protestant church has its own traditions
 - 1) It is often the accepted traditions that distinguish between the denominations
 - 2) To be a member of a particular denomination, one must accept its traditions
4. In this study, we will address the following questions...
 - a. What are traditions?
 - b. Are traditions always wrong?
 - c. If not, when does a tradition become sinful?

[Let's begin with...]

I. THE MEANING OF TRADITION

A. THE WORD ITSELF...

1. The Greek word is **paradosis**, which means "giving over" or "handing down"
2. It refers to teaching that is handed down either by word (orally) or in writing

B. AS UNDERSTOOD BY THE JEWS...

1. It was often applied to the oral teachings of the elders (distinguished elders from Moses on down)
2. These traditions were often divided into three classes...
 - a. Some oral laws supposedly given by Moses in addition to the written laws
 - b. Decisions of various judges which became precedents in judicial matters
 - c. Interpretations of highly respected rabbis which were held in reverence along with the

OT scriptures - **Article on “Tradition”, ISBE**

3. Prior to his conversion, Paul was a staunch supporter of Jewish tradition - **Ga 1:13-14**

C. AS UNDERSTOOD BY ROMAN AND GREEK CATHOLICS...

1. Their views appear to be parallel to that of the Jews
2. What they consider “Tradition” is what they believe to be the teachings:
 - a. Of Jesus or the apostles, persevered orally rather than through writing
 - b. Of various councils which have left various decrees
 - c. Of various church leaders (such as the pope) considered to be inspired with later revelations from God
3. Of course, one is expected to take their word for it that these “traditions” were truly from God and have been faithfully transmitted

D. AS FOUND IN THE SCRIPTURES...

1. The word “tradition” as such is not found in the Old Testament
2. It is found thirteen times in New Testament
 - a. Three times it refers to “apostolic teaching”
 - 1) That which had been delivered by the apostles - **1 Co 11:2**
 - 2) Whether by word (in person) or epistle - **2 Th 2:15**
 - 3) Which Christians were expected to keep - **2 Th 3:6**
 - b. Ten times it refers to “the tradition of the elders” or “the traditions of men”
 - 1) As in our text and parallel passages - **Mt 15:2-6; Mk 7:3-13;**
 - 2) Of which Paul warned the Colossians - **Co 2:8**
 - 3) From which Jewish Christians had been delivered - **1 Pe 1:18; Ga 1:14**
3. Jesus did not feel bound to abide by “the traditions of the elders”
 - a. Some traditions He had no problem with keeping
 - 1) Such as going to a wedding feast - **Jn 2:1-2**
 - 2) Or attending the Feast Of Dedication - **Jn 10:22-23**
 - b. But He just as easily had no problem with violating other traditions
 - 1) Plucking grain or healing on the Sabbath
 - 2) Eating with unwashed hands
 - c. Evidently Jesus did not subscribe to the view of “traditions” handed down orally
 - 1) He never appealed to the traditions of the elders
 - 2) He either appealed to the authority of the written Word (the Law of Moses), or to His own authority as the Son of God

[Not all “traditions” are wrong. When they are teachings inspired of God, given and “written” by men approved of God, they are to be heeded. But when they are doctrines or interpretations handed down by uninspired men, then like the traditions of the Jews they are suspect. As we return to our text (**Mt 15:1-9**), Jesus points out...]

II. THE DANGER OF TRADITIONS OF MEN

A. THEY CAN MAKE VOID THE WORD OF GOD...

1. Jesus gave the example of honoring one’s parents - **Mt 15:3-6**
 - a. The tradition of the elders taught giving to the temple freed one from giving to one’s parents
 - b. Thus rendering the command of God of no effect
2. There are traditions of men today with similar affect

- a. Such as the practice of sprinkling for baptism, a tradition of man
 - b. When one keeps the tradition of sprinkling, they make the command of God to be baptized (immersed) of no effect!
3. Through such traditions, one is actually rejecting the command of God! - cf. **Mk 7:8-9**

B. THEY CAN LEAD TO VAIN WORSHIP...

1. When traditions of men are taught on the same level as the commands of God, it leads to vain worship - **Mt 15:9**
2. Such worship may appear to be impressive, but it is actually “empty, worthless”
 - a. First, because God did not command it
 - b. Second, because it does not accomplish the good we really need - cf. **Co 2:18-23**

C. THEY CAN LEAD TO HYPOCRITICAL WORSHIP...

1. Traditions of men tend toward ritualism (just look at the rituals found in many religions that have no scriptural basis)
2. Such ritualism is often done repeatedly, with little thought as to its origin and purpose
3. It is easy to go through such rituals, with the heart and mind on other things
4. Worship without the heart (or mind) of man is hypocritical worship! - **Mt 15:7-8**

CONCLUSION

1. What are traditions...?
 - a. They are simply teachings that have been handed down
 - b. In the case of inspired men (like the apostles) given in person or through their writings, such traditions are good and to be followed
2. Oral traditions, given through a chain of uninspired men, are at best suspect...
 - a. Jesus did not hold traditions orally transmitted through the Jews on par with God’s written word
 - b. Neither should we hold traditions orally transmitted through Christians on par with God’s written word
3. At worst, traditions of men can be vain and deadly...
 - a. When their observance leads one to not keep a command of God
 - b. When they are taught as doctrine, on par with God’s word
 - c. When they lead to ritualism, done without engaging the heart and mind of man

From the words of Jesus, let us be aware of “**The Danger Of Traditions**”, and make sure that our faith and practice is based upon the written Word of God, and not the interpretations and teachings of uninspired men!

Blind Leaders Of The Blind

Matthew 15:12-14

INTRODUCTION

1. Who can you trust regarding religious matters today?
 - a. Many people trust their preacher, priest, or pastor
 - b. They assume that “a man of God” must be trustworthy
2. Yet the Bible does not always speak highly of religious leaders...
 - a. Paul warned about “savage wolves” not sparing the flock of God - **Ac 20:29-30**
 - b. Peter wrote of “false teachers” bringing in destructive heresies - **2 Pe 2:1-2**
-- Such men would knowingly destroy the people of God
3. Not all those who mislead do so knowingly...
 - a. Jesus told His disciples about “blind leaders of the blind” - **Mt 15:12-14**
 - b. Being “blind” themselves, they may not be aware of how they mislead others
4. The end result is still the same, however...
 - a. Those misled still “fall into the ditch”, they are still destroyed - **Mt 15:14; Isa 9:16**
 - b. Whether led by a “false teacher”, or by a “blind leader”
5. That we ourselves might not blindly follow a blind leader...
 - a. What are some of the characteristics of a blind leader?
 - b. How can we be sure not to be misled by a blind leader?
-- These are the questions we hope to answer in this study

[While Peter had much to say about false teachers (cf. **2 Pe 2**), Jesus had much to say about blind leaders...]

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF A BLIND LEADER

A. HOLDING TO THE TRADITIONS OF MEN...

1. This was the case of the Pharisees in **Mt 15**
2. They were willing to put their traditions above God’s word - **Mt 15:3,6,9**
3. Blind leaders today will do the same
 - a. Teaching as doctrine their traditions
 - b. Not knowing that what they teach comes from man, not God

B. MAKING DISTINCTIONS WHERE GOD HAS MADE NONE...

1. This was the case of the Pharisees in **Mt 23**, where they are called “blind” five times
2. They made fine distinctions between the types of oaths one could swear - **Mt 23:16-22**
3. Blind leaders will often do the same today
 - a. Making fine distinctions so that one need not keep God’s word
 - b. Saying some commands of God are essential to salvation, and others not

C. LEAVING COMMANDS OF GOD UNDONE...

1. Again, the Pharisees were guilty of this, for which they were called “blind guides”
2. They left undone the “weightier” matters of God’s law - **Mt 23:23-24**
 - a. They stressed tithing, but neglected justice, mercy, faith
 - b. Thus they would strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel
3. Blind leaders today often do the same, but in reverse...
 - a. They are quick to stress the “weightier” matters, and leave what they consider the “lighter” things undone
 - b. But Jesus said we should do both, leaving neither undone!

D. FOCUSING ONLY ON THE OUTER MAN...

1. The “blind Pharisee” worked only on the outside - **Mt 23:25-28**
 - a. Concerned with keeping the traditions of ritual cleansing
 - b. Willing to put up with extortion, self-indulgence, hypocrisy and lawlessness
2. Today, blind leaders are happy with the appearance of success...
 - a. Big buildings, large crowds
 - b. Accepting people into the church without challenging them to true repentance

E. OTHER CHARACTERISTICS...

1. From this passage (**Mt 23**) in which Jesus assails the Pharisees, we glean some other characteristics of those who were blind leaders
2. Summarizing these quickly...
 - a. They say and do not, binding heavy burdens on others - **Mt 23:1-4**
 - b. They do their works to be seen of men - **Mt 23:5**
 - c. They love the attention and special treatment by others - **Mt 23:6-7**
 - d. They wear religious titles, though Jesus condemned it - **Mt 23:8-10**
 - e. They fail to truly show the way to the kingdom of heaven - **Mt 23:13**
 - f. They use their religion to make money and impress others - **Mt 23:14**
 - g. They don’t make people better, they make them worse! - **Mt 23:15**
 - h. They honor the men of God who went before them, but are more like those who persecuted the people of God - **Mt 23:29-31**

[Sadly, this sounds like many religious leaders today, especially some on TV! If we are not careful, we can easily be led astray by them. This leads to our next point...]

II. HOW NOT TO BE MISLED BY BLIND LEADERS

A. LISTEN TO THEM CAREFULLY...

1. We need to have the same attitude as the Bereans - **Ac 17:11**
 - a. When Paul came to town, they “received the word with all readiness”
 - b. This describes how they listened to Paul - paying close attention to the things he was teaching
 2. We must first give all teachers a fair and careful hearing
 - a. Seek to understand exactly what they are saying
 - b. It requires that we be good listeners
- Many are misled because they have never learned to listen carefully to what is being taught them! (How well do you listen?)

B. SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES DAILY...

1. This was another noble quality of the Bereans - **Ac 17:11**

- a. Having listened carefully, they then went home and compared what Paul said to the Scriptures
- b. They did not simply accept whatever Paul said
2. Unfortunately, many today are Biblically illiterate...
 - a. They do not follow along in their Bibles when someone is teaching or preaching
 - b. They do not read their Bibles daily
- Failure to do these things leaves one in a blind condition, unable to discern what is the word of God, or some teaching and tradition of man!

CONCLUSION

1. What will be the end of blind leaders, and those who follow them?
 - a. Like plants, they will be “uprooted” by the Heavenly Father - **Mt 15:13**
 - b. Together they will both “fall into a ditch” - **Mt 15:14**
 - c. Though very religious, thinking that they serve the Lord, Jesus will tell them: “I never knew you;
depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” - cf. **Mt 7:21-23**
2. Who are to blame, if people are misled by blind leaders?
 - a. The blind leader will be held accountable, but not totally
 - a. If people are blind, it is only because they have closed their own eyes - **Mt 13:15**

May the example of the Bereans remind us of what is necessary not to be misled by blind leaders, and may we so see and hear that what Jesus said will be true of us:

“But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.” (Mt 13:16-17)

Beware Of Leaven

Matthew 16:5-12

INTRODUCTION

1. In the course of His public ministry, Jesus was often challenged by the Pharisees, along with the Sadducees...
 - a. They questioned why He ate with sinners - **Mt 9:11**
 - b. They accused His disciples of breaking the Sabbath - **Mt 12:1-2**
 - c. They accused His disciples of violating the traditions of the elders - **Mt 15:1-2**
 - d. They sought to test Him by for a sign - **Mt 16:1**
2. Jesus therefore warned His disciples concerning these religious leaders...
 - a. They were “blind leaders of the blind” - **Mt 15:12-14**
 - b. The disciples were to beware of their doctrine - **Mt 16:5-12**
3. Jesus described their doctrine as “leaven” (yeast)...
 - a. Used in the making of bread, leaven gradually spreads through the dough, making it rise
 - b. Jesus used the figure of leaven to describe the spread of His kingdom - **Mt 13:33**
 - c. But in **Mt 16:6**, He uses it to depict the pernicious doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees - **Mt 16:11-12**

[What were the doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees that Jesus warned about? Are there modern Pharisees and Sadducees that we should beware of today? To answer these questions, let’s begin by taking a look at...]

I. THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES

A. THE PHARISEES IN JESUS’ DAY...

1. A religious and political group noted for its conservatism
 - a. They were strict observers of the Law of Moses
 - b. They also adopted “the traditions of the elders”, interpretations of the Law that had been handed down - cf. **Mk 7:1-5**
2. Jesus described them as “blind leaders of the blind” - **Mt 15:12-14**
 - a. They made the commandments of God of no effect by their traditions - **Mt 15:3-6**
 - b. They were hypocrites, teaching one thing and practicing another - **Mt 15:7-8; 16:3; 23:1-4, 27-28; cf. Lk 12:1**
 - c. They did their works to be seen of men - **Mt 23:5**
 - d. They loved the attention and special treatment by others - **Mt 23:6-7**
 - e. They wore religious titles - **Mt 23:8-10**
 - f. They prevented others from finding the way to the kingdom of heaven - **Mt 23:13**
 - g. They used their religion to make money and impress others - **Mt 23:14**
 - h. They don’t make people better, they make them worse! - **Mt 23:15**
 - i. They made distinctions where God had made none - **Mt 23:16-22**
 - j. Though sticklers for some commandments, they ignored others - **Mt 23:23-24**
 - k. They honored men of God who went before them, but were more like those who persecuted the people of God - **Mt 23:29-31**

B. PHARISEES IN OUR DAY...

1. Many people accuse those who stress the keeping of God's commands as legalists, and therefore "Pharisees" today - but consider:
 - a. The words legalism, legalist, are not found in the Scriptures - they are labels used to defame those who seek to encourage the keeping of God's commands
 - b. Jesus never faulted the Pharisees for strict adherence to the Law itself
 - 1) Only for making the commands of God of no effect by their traditions!
 - 2) Only for leaving some commands of God undone while doing others!
 - c. If calling for strict observance of God's commandments makes one a legalist, then Jesus was a legalist!
 - 1) While the Law was in force, He expected it to be taught and observed down to its smallest detail - **Mt 5:17-19**
 - 2) He expected His disciples to surpass the Pharisees in their righteousness - **Mt 5:20**
 - 3) He called for His disciples to express their love for Him by keeping His commandments - **Jn 14:15,21,23**
 - 4) He promised His love and friendship to those who would keep His commandments - **Jn 15:10,14**
 - 5) He expected disciples from all nations to observe whatever He commanded His apostles - **Mt 28:19-20**
 - d. If calling for strict observance of God's commandments makes one a legalist, then the apostles were legalists!
 - 1) Paul stressed the keeping of commandments - **1 Co 7:19; 1 Th 4:1-2**
 - 2) John stressed the keeping of commandments - **1 Jn 2:3-5; 3:22-24; 5:2-3**
2. The true Pharisees today are those who:
 - a. Teach and practice traditions of men, instead of the commands of God
 - b. Teach one thing, while practicing another
 - c. Do things to be seen of men, wearing special garments and asking to be called by religious titles
 - d. Do not truly show people the way to the kingdom of heaven
 - e. Use religion to make money and impress others
 - f. Make distinctions where God has made none
 - g. Stress some commands, but neglect others as unnecessary

[Such are the Pharisees of today, who often condemn others as "legalists" (as a way to deflect the charge that their lives and teachings are contrary to the commandments of our Lord). Now let's take a look at...]

II. THE LEAVEN OF THE SADDUCEES

A. THE SADDUCEES IN JESUS' DAY...

1. A religious and political group noted for its liberalism
 - a. Included many powerful members of the priesthood - **Ac 5:17**
 - b. They insisted only the laws found in the Pentateuch (first five books of the OT) were binding
 - c. They rejected "the traditions of the elders", interpretations of the Law that had been handed down
 - d. They did not believe in the resurrection, spirits, angels - **Ac 23:8; Mt 22:23**
 - e. They did not believe in rewards or punishment after death, nor in heaven or hell

2. Jesus charged them with two faults - **Mt 22:23-29**
 - a. They did not know the Scriptures
 - 1) Even those scriptures they held to be true!
 - 2) For Jesus used a statement in the Pentateuch to show their error - **Mt 22:31-32; Exo 3:6**
 - b. They did not know the power of God
 - 1) Like many liberals, they were influenced by rationalism
 - 2) They assumed if they could not conceive or comprehend something, it could not be
 - 3) They failed to believe what Gabriel and Jesus both knew: that with God, nothing is impossible! - **Lk 1:37; Mt 19:26**

B. SADDUCEES IN OUR DAY...

1. Those who take some portions of God's word, but reject the rest; such as:
 - a. Those who heed only the "red-letter" words of Jesus
 - b. Those who will accept the words of Jesus, but not His apostles
 - c. Those who accept the words of His apostles, but hold that all of Jesus' teachings in the gospels are Old Covenant teaching
 - The apostles' words are just as authoritative (**Jn 13:10; Ac 2:42; 1 Co 14:37**), and so were the words of Jesus spoken during His earthly ministry (**Mt 28:20; Ac 20:35; 1 Ti 5:18b; Lk 10:7**)

Ti

2. Those who accept human reason over divine revelation
 - a. Many will not accept a Biblical doctrine unless it "makes sense" to them
 - b. A dangerous position to hold, since God has chosen to confound the wise and arrogant with the foolishness of the gospel message - cf. **1 Co 1:18-31**
 - c. Some doctrines revealed may contain elements beyond man's ability to fully comprehend (such as the mystery of godliness: God manifested in the flesh - **1 Ti 3:16**; or the nature of the Godhead itself)
 - A childlike trust is more becoming of a Christian - cf. **Mt 18:3; Psa 131:1-3**
3. Those who rule out the power of God
 - a. Who reject any doctrine, any promise, of the Scriptures if conceived as not being physically possible
 - b. Such as the creation of the world, the virgin birth, the miracles of Jesus, the resurrection of the dead
 - Once we accept the premise that with God all things are possible, we cannot reject Biblical testimony or doctrine just because it does not fit our preconceived ideas of what is possible

CONCLUSION

1. Is there a need to "**Beware Of Leaven**" today...?
 - a. Are there modern-day Pharisees and Sadducees?
 - b. Are there doctrines that can permeate and spread through the Lord's church like leaven?
2. The answer to such questions is a resounding "Yes!"
 - a. Such doctrines abound in the denominational world around us
 - b. Much error that makes its way into the church usually falls into one of two categories:
 - 1) Traditions of men proclaimed as doctrines (like the Pharisees)
 - 2) Doctrines of the Bible rejected as impossible (like the Sadducees)

And so the warning by Jesus is just as great today: “...beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” (**Mt 16:11**)

I Will Build My Church

Matthew 16:13-20

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Mt 16:13-17**, Jesus questioned His disciples concerning His identity...
 - a. He asked who others thought He was
 - b. He then asked who they thought He was
 - c. Peter responded: *“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”*
 - d. Jesus commended Peter, stating that his confession of faith was based upon what the Father Himself had revealed - **Mt 16:17**

2. Jesus then used this opportunity to speak of His church... - **Mt 16:18-19**
 - a. He promised to build His church
 - b. He mentioned the foundation upon which it would be built
 - c. He described the ultimate victory of His church
 - d. He spoke of great authority that would be given

3. This passage naturally raises several questions...
 - a. What is this “church” Jesus promised to build?
 - b. What is the “foundation” upon which it would be built?
 - c. How would “the gates of Hades” not prevail against it?
 - d. What “authority” was given by Jesus, and to whom?

[Anyone who believes in Jesus should have a vital interest in the answers to these questions. So let’s begin by noting first of all...]

I. THE CHURCH JESUS BUILT

A. THE CHURCH DEFINED...

1. The Greek word is **ekklesia**, meaning “an assembly, a congregation”
2. It is used in the Bible most often in two senses:
 - a. **The church “universal”** - the whole assembly of people who are saved, both living and dead
 - b. **The church “local”** - a company of saved people in a geographical area who work and worship together as a local congregation
3. In our text, Jesus is using the word “church” in its universal sense

B. THE CHURCH CHARACTERIZED...

1. It is called “the body of Christ” - **Ep 1:22-23**
2. It is called “the household of God” - **1 Ti 3:15**
3. It is called “the temple of God” - **Ep 2:19-22; 1 Pe 2:5**
4. It is called “the kingdom of Christ” - **Co 1:13; cf. Re 1:9**
5. It is called “the bride of Christ” - **2 Co 11:2; cf. Re 19:6-9; 21:2**
- Each of these expressions emphasize some blessing or responsibility we have as those who have been called out of the world into this spiritual assembly of God’s people

C. THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED...

1. It is evident that the church was not established at the time Jesus spoke...
 - a. He said “I **will** build My church...” - **Mt 16:18**
 - b. He told His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ (as we will see, the very foundation upon which the church was to be built) - **Mt 16:20**
2. The church is mentioned after Jesus’ resurrection...
 - a. The Lord was adding people to the church - **Ac 2:47**
 - b. From that time forward, the church is spoken of as being in existence
3. It is fair to conclude that the church began on the day of Pentecost...
 - a. When the Spirit was poured out on the apostles - **Ac 2:1-21**
 - b. When Peter preached the first gospel sermon - **Ac 2:22-40**
 - c. When thousands were saved, and the Lord added them to His church - **Ac 2:41,47**

D. THE CHURCH VISIBLE...

1. The church “universal” is a spiritual body of people
 - a. Known only by the Lord Himself - cf. **Ac 2:47; 2 Ti 2:19; Jn 10:14**
 - b. There is no earthly organization, headquarters, etc., for the church universal
 - c. Any attempt to organize and activate the church “universal” results in denominationalism
2. The church “local” is the only visible sign of the church
 - a. Local churches are made up of Christians in geographical areas who work and worship together as a unit - cf. **Ac 8:1; 13:1; 14:21-23,27**
 - b. With their frequent assembling, it is easy to identify a local church - cf. **1 Co 1:2; 11:17-18; 14:23**

[The church Jesus built, then, is that great gathering of people who respond to the gospel in faith and obedience (cf. **Ac 2:41**). Wherever faithful disciples of Christ assemble to work and worship as a local congregation, a church of Christ is found (cf. **Ro 16:16**). As we return to our text, we next consider...]

II. THE FOUNDATION OF HIS CHURCH**A. MANY PASSAGES PROCLAIM JESUS AS THE “CORNERSTONE”...**

1. As foretold by Isaiah - **Isa 28:16**
2. As proclaimed by Peter - **Ac 4:11-12; 1 Pe 2:6-8**
3. As taught by Paul - **1 Co 3:11; Ep 2:20**

B. BUT IS JESUS THE “ROCK” IN MATTHEW 16:18...?

1. Some believe the “rock” is Peter, as the first pope
 - a. This is the claim of the Roman catholic church
 - b. This idea was first raised only after various bishops began claiming universal authority over the church, hundreds of years after the church began
 - c. Even if Peter is the “rock” in this passage, there is no Biblical basis for the idea that the church was built upon Peter alone
2. Some think the “rock” may be Peter, but with scriptural limitations
 - a. I.e., the church would be built upon Peter, but not solely upon him
 - 1) Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, the primary foundation - cf. **Ep 2:20; 1 Pe 2:6**
 - 2) But one may also speak of the church built upon the apostles (including Peter) as the church’s foundation, in a secondary sense - cf. **Ep 2:20; Re 21:14**
 - b. That Jesus may be referring to what we learn later to be true, that upon Peter (along with the other apostles and Christ Himself) Jesus would build His church

3. Jesus might be referring to the principle of divine revelation working through His apostles, like Peter...
 - a. Jesus had just praised Peter for his confession, which was the result of divine revelation - **Mt 16:16-17**
 - b. Jesus went on to say how Peter would possess the keys of the kingdom and the power of binding and loosing, all related to the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles - cf. **Mt 16:19; Jn 16:12-13; 20:22-23**
 - If so, then Jesus is making the point that His church, while established through the work of men like Peter and the apostles, would be built on a solid foundation since they would be led by divine revelation
4. A strong possibility is that the “rock” is the confession Peter just made...
 - a. I.e., the truth of the confession: “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God”
 - b. Just as Simon had been called “a rock” (Gr., petros), so the church would be established on a solid “rock” (Gr., petra) or fact: that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the Living God”!

[Whatever the “rock” in **Mt 16:18**, the church is built upon the strong foundation of Christ Himself and His apostles (**Ep 2:20**). At this point, let’s skip ahead to what we learn about...]

III. THE AUTHORITY OF HIS CHURCH

A. AUTHORITY WAS PROMISED TO THE APOSTLES...

1. To Peter was promised “the keys of the kingdom” - **Mt 16:19**
 - a. The figure of “keys” suggest the ability to allow entrance into the kingdom
 - b. Peter exercised this ability through preaching the gospel, as he did on the day of Pentecost - **Ac 2:17-41**
2. To the apostles was promised the power “to bind” and “to loose”
 - a. To Peter in this passage - **Mt 16:19**
 - b. To the rest of the disciples was promised similar power - **Mt 18:18**
 - Of course, presumed in all this would be the guidance of the Spirit, promised to lead the apostles into all the truth - **Jn 16:12-13**

B. THE EARLY CHURCH RECOGNIZED THIS AUTHORITY...

1. They “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine...” - **Ac 2:42**
2. Christians were commended for their acceptance of the apostles’ doctrine - **1 Co 11:2; 1 Th 2:13**
3. They were exhorted to receive the apostles’ teaching - **1 Co 14:37; 2 Th 2:15**

[The Lord’s church today, then, is wherever there are souls who have been saved and who continue to abide in the apostles’ doctrine. For those who remain faithful to the Lord and His apostles, they can look forward to...]

IV. THE ULTIMATE VICTORY OF HIS CHURCH

A. THE “GATES OF HADES” WILL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT...

1. The phrase “gates of Hades” has been variously interpreted as:
 - a. The powers of death (i.e., death itself)
 - b. The forces of hell (whatever forces Satan might bring to bear)
2. In either case, the “gates of Hades” have not prevailed!

- a. Death did not prevent Jesus from building His church
- b. The forces of Satan have not succeeded in destroying His church

B. WE CAN SHARE IN THE ULTIMATE VICTORY OF HIS CHURCH...

1. By putting on the armor of God - **Ep 6:10-13**
2. By steadfastly resisting our adversary, the devil - **1 Pe 5:8-10**
3. Nothing, not even death itself, can prevent us from being “more than conquerors” - **Ro 8:35-39**
4. The glory of this ultimate victory are beautifully portrayed in the visions of Revelation - e.g., **Re 7:9-17**

CONCLUSION

1. Do we desire to participate in this glorious victory of Jesus’ church...?
 - a. Then we must first be saved - **Ac 2:38-41,47**
 - b. We must also abide steadfastly in Jesus’ doctrine, which is also the apostles’ doctrine - **Jn 8:31; Ac 2:42; 1 Th 2:13; 2 Th 2:13-15**
 - c. We must remain faithful until death - **Re 2:10**
2. Through God’s grace, and our faithful obedience, we can be privileged to be a part of that church...
 - a. Which Jesus built as promised
 - b. Which shall withstand whatever “the gates of Hades” might throw against it

Don’t you want to be a part of the church of Christ? May the words of Jesus in **Mt 16:18-19** encourage us to be satisfied with nothing less!

The Value Of A Soul

Matthew 16:26

INTRODUCTION

1. In a chapel in southern France, the great emperor Charlemagne is buried in an unusual way...
 - a. He is seated on a marble chair and wrapped in his emperor's robes
 - b. In his lap is a copy of the NT, and his finger is pointing to a verse which reads:

“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” - Mt 16:26

2. In these words of Jesus we are reminded of the value of the soul...
 - a. It is the most valuable possession one has
 - b. All the wealth and power one might gain is not worth the price of one's soul!
 - Which may be the point of Charlemagne's unusual burial
3. It is a lesson we do well to remember, and so in this study we shall examine three questions...
 - a. Does the Bible teach that man has a soul?
 - b. Why is one's soul so valuable?
 - c. What will one give in exchange for his or her soul?

[Because of error taught by some, it is important to provide a Bible answer the first question...]

I. DOES MAN HAVE A SOUL?

A. SOME TEACH OTHERWISE...

1. Such as members of the Watchtower Society (i.e., “Jehovah’s Witnesses”)
2. Who say man “is” a soul, not “has” a soul
3. The controversy revolves around the multifaceted use of the words for “soul”
 - a. The Hebrew is **nephesh**, and at times it may refer to:
 - 1) Animal life - **Gen 1:20-21** (“living”)
 - 2) The person - **Num 31:19** (“killed any person”)
 - 3) The body - **Num 6:6** (“a dead body”)
 - 4) Something distinguished from the body - **Isa 10:18** (“soul and body”)
 - 5) Breath - **Job 41:21** (referring to Leviathan)
 - b. The Greek word is **psuche**, and at times it may refer to:
 - 1) The person - **1 Pe 3:20** (“eight souls saved by water”)
 - 2) Life itself - **Jn 13:38** (“lay down your life”)
 - 3) Something distinguished from the spirit - **He 4:12** (“soul and spirit”)
 - 4) Something distinguished from the body - **1 Th 5:23** (“spirit and soul and body”)
 - 5) That which exists after the body is dissolved - **Mt 10:28** (“kill the body but not the soul”)
 - Those who deny that man “has” a soul fail to consider that words may have many different meanings and applications

B. THE BIBLE REVEALS A PART OF MAN EXISTS AFTER DEATH...

1. In the teaching of Jesus
 - a. Man is both body and soul; the soul can survive murder by a fellow man - **Mt 10:28**
 - b. The story of Lazarus and the rich man - cf. **Lk 16:22-23**
 - 1) Some say this is only a parable
 - 2) Even if it is (which is highly unlikely), parables were “true to life” stories, not fantasy!
 - c. His promise to the thief on the cross - **Lk 23:42-43**
2. In the teaching of Paul
 - a. There is “the inner man” that can renewed, even while “the outer man” decays - **2 Co 4:16-18**
 - b. One can be with the Lord, while absent from the body - **2 Co 5:6-8**
 - c. There is a part of man that can be “out of the body” - **2 Co 12:3**
 - d. One can be dead, yet still be with Christ - **Ph 1:23**
 - e. Reference is made to the “spirits of just men” - **He 12:22-23**
3. The teaching of Peter
 - a. He spoke of the “spirits in prison” - **1 Pe 3:18-20**
 - b. He wrote of those who are “dead, but live in the spirit” - **1 Pe 4:6**
 - c. He described the body as a tabernacle to be put off...if the body is a tabernacle (dwelling place), what dwells in it? - **2 Pe 1:13-14**
 - d. The unjust are under punishment, just like some angels - **2 Pe 2:4,9-10**
4. John, in the Revelation given to him, saw “souls of those slain”, and they were capable of crying out with loud voices, and being comforted - **Re 6:9-11**
 - There is also much material in the OT

[So while one may say in the right context that man “is” a soul, we must also be willing to say that the Bible teaches man “has” a soul. Now let’s consider the next question...]

II. WHY IS THE SOUL OF MAN SO VALUABLE?

A. IT IS MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE...

1. Man was created in the image of God - **Gen 1:26-27**
 - a. Yet God does not have a physical body like ours - cf. **Jn 4:24; Lk 24:39**
 - b. Therefore it must be our soul, or spirit, that is in God’s image
2. This is what enable us to comprehend abstract concepts as:
 - a. Life, death, eternity
 - b. Things of beauty
 - c. A moral sense of ought, right and wrong, good and evil
 - Making us more than just animal creatures - cf. **Psa 8:3-8**

B. IT IS THAT PART OVER WHICH WE HAVE MUCH CONTROL...

1. The body is mostly the result of genetics
 - a. We might be able to change a little through exercise, plastic surgery, etc.
 - b. But we cannot stop the eventual aging and dying process
2. The soul, however, is different...
 - a. Despite one’s genetics, there is much that can be changed
 - b. By cooperating with God, we can change attitudes, dispositions, character - **Ro 12:1-2; Ga 5:21-22; Co 3:12-15**

C. IT DOES NOT CEASE TO EXIST AT DEATH...

1. The body dies, and soon returns back to the dust
 - a. The soul, or spirit, returns back to God - **Ecc 12:7**
 - b. Awaiting the resurrection of the body - cf. **1 Co 15:35-58**
2. After which comes the Judgment - **He 9:27; 2 Co 5:10**
 - a. The soul, in its resurrected body, will bear the brunt of that Judgment
 - b. Either eternal life, honor, glory, and immortality - **Ro 2:7**
 - c. Or indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish - **Ro 2:8-9**
- Which is why we need to evaluate all things (possessions, decisions, actions) from an eternal perspective, from the soul's viewpoint - **Mt 10:28; 16:26**

D. THE COST REQUIRED TO REDEEM IT...

1. What price was required to redeem our souls from the wrath of God's judgment?
2. Nothing less than the blood of the Son of God! - **1 Pe 1:18-19**
- Even if we cannot fully comprehend why Jesus had to die, we should be able to see that the souls of men must be extremely valuable if His death was necessary

[So the Bible teaches that the soul is more valuable than the whole world! And yet, many people "sell their souls" for what surely are petty bargains...]

III. WHAT WILL ONE GIVE IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUL?

A. WHAT IT MEANS TO EXCHANGE SOMETHING FOR YOUR SOUL...

1. The word "exchange" pictures a business transaction in which one is bartering for something else
2. "Barter" means "to trade or exchange one commodity for another"
- Thus it means to trade your soul for something else

B. THINGS FOR WHICH PEOPLE TRADE THEIR SOULS...

1. For some people, it is earthly riches and fame
 - a. In their quest for riches, they neglect their service to God - **1 Ti 6:10**
 - b. Yet they've traded their souls for what is corruptible and can be stolen - **Mt 6:19-21**
2. For others, it is the "passing pleasures of sin"
 - a. Like the young man tempted by the harlot - **Pro 5:1-14**
 - 1) In a moment's passion, lives are destroyed (AIDS, unwanted pregnancies)
 - 2) Marriages and families are ruined
 - b. Young people like Joseph, Moses, and Daniel should inspire us to make the right choices - cf. **Gen 39:7-9; He 11:24-25; Dan 1:8**
3. Then others allow their souls to be sold for some convenient false doctrine
 - a. Of which we need to beware - **Co 2:8,18**
 - b. For the devil is a master at this - **2 Co 11:13-15**
 - c. Through our own lack of Bible study, we can lose the most valuable thing we have! cf. **Hos 4:6**
4. Finally, many will trade their souls through simple laziness!
 - a. They will not use the opportunities the Lord has given them - cf. **Mt 25:24-30**
 - b. They fail to apply the diligence necessary to grow spiritually - cf. **2 Pe 1:5-11**

CONCLUSION

1. How valuable is your soul...?

- a. Think of what the rich man in Hades would tell you - cf. **Lk 16:22-24**
 - b. Think of what the souls of the redeemed would say to you - cf. **Re 7:13-17**
 - c. Think of what Jesus and God have done to save your soul! - **Jn 3:16**
2. It matters not what else you do in this life, if you do not save your own soul, you have been a complete failure...
- a. You might gather about you great riches and fame, and leave thousands of friends to mourn your departing, but if have not saved your soul, you have been a miserable failure!
 - b. On the other hand, you may die in a charity home for the poor, and be buried in a potter's field without a single friend to mourn, but if you saved your soul, your life was a marvelous success!
3. You can't afford to lose your soul, for if you lose it, you lose all...
- a. To the faithful will be given the place of eternal rest
 - 1) There will be no pain, sickness, or death there
 - 2) It is the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away.
 - 3) It is that city built by the living God
 - b. On the other hand, there is the place of eternal punishment
 - 1) It is where the wicked will be tormented day and night forever
 - 2) It is where you will bemoan your great foolishness for having sold your soul for such petty things!
4. Dear friends and brethren, you don't have to lose your soul...
- a. Humbly submit yourself to the will of God
 - b. Let His Word guide you, and let no man beguile you of your reward
 - c. Overcome temptations, and suffer for His cause with rejoicing
- If you do these things, you will save your soul, and heaven will be yours, because the Eternal God who cannot lie, has promised it!

Note: The main idea and several thoughts from this lesson were taken from a lesson by David Riggs. The URL for his web site of sermons is: <http://www.public.usit.net/driggs/sermons.htm>

They Beheld His Majesty

Matthew 17:1-9

INTRODUCTION

1. What a blessing it must have been, spending time with Christ during His earthly ministry...
 - a. To hear His teaching, spoken with the voice of authority - **Mt 7:28-29**
 - b. To witness His miracles, which manifested His glory - **Jn 2:11**

2. Among those blessed to be with Jesus, three men especially so: Peter, James and John...
 - a. They accompanied Jesus on the mount of transfiguration - **Mt 17:1-2**
 - b. Peter would later write of that experience on the mount - **2 Pe 1:16-18**
 - 1) He says they were “eyewitnesses of His majesty”
 - 2) That Jesus received “honor and glory” from God the Father
 - What an experience this must have been for these three fishermen from Galilee!

3. The setting that led up to this event was as follows...
 - a. Jesus had just made two amazing statements:
 - 1) He would come in glory and reward each one according to his works - **Mt 16:27**
 - 2) As supporting evidence, some would not taste death before they saw...
 - a) “the Son of Man coming in His kingdom” - **Mt 16:28**
 - b) “the kingdom of God come with power” - **Mk 9:1**
 - c) “the kingdom of God” - **Lk 9:27**
 - b. The gospel writers then connect these sayings with the event about to occur:
 - 1) Matthew and Mark record “and after six days...” - **Mk 17:1; Mk 9:2**
 - 2) Luke writes “about eight days” (“the Jewish equivalent of ‘about a week later’.”) - **Lk 9:28**
 - 3) Luke adds “after these sayings”, clearly tying the event to what had just been said

[What happened on the mount? Simply put, “**They Beheld His Majesty**”. What was the significance of this event? To answer this question, let’s now take a closer look and note first of all..]

I. THEY BEHELD THE MAJESTY OF HIS PERSON

A. EVIDENCED BY HIS TRANSFIGURATION...

1. He was "transfigured" - **Mt 17:2; Mk 9:2**
 - a. Gr., **metamorphoo** {met-am-or-fo'-o}
 - b. Meaning to change, transfigure, transform
2. This change affected His face and clothing
 - a. His face shone like the sun - **Mt 17:2** (Luke says the appearance of His face was altered - **Lk 9:29**)
 - b. His clothes became as white as the light - **Mt 17:2**
 - 1) Shining, exceedingly white, like snow, more than any launderer can whiten them - **Mk 9:3**
 - 2) White and glistening - **Lk 9:29**
- Peter later wrote that what he saw was His "majesty" (**2 Pe 1:16**); the effulgence of His glory likely represented His deity as the Son of God - cf. **He 1:1-3**

B. EVIDENCED BY THE PRESENCE OF MOSES AND ELIJAH...

1. They were talking with Jesus - **Mt 17:3; Mk 9:4**
 - a. They also appeared in glory - **Lk 9:31a**
 - b. Discussing with Jesus about His coming death in Jerusalem - **Lk 9:31b**
 - c. Peter, James, and John had been sleeping, but awoke to see Jesus in His glory, and talking with Moses and Elijah - **Lk 9:32**
 - d. Moses and Elijah then began to depart - **Lk 9:33**
 2. That Moses and Elijah would appear with Jesus was not lost on Peter - **Mt 17:4**
 - a. Moses and Elijah were the epitome of the Law and the Prophets
 - b. Peter wanted to build three tabernacles, one each for Jesus, Moses and Elijah
- Jesus had evidently been elevated to the same level as Moses and Elijah in Peter's mind!

[But Peter was soon to learn that Jesus was above Moses and Elijah, especially in regards to His authority! As we continue, therefore, we note that...]

II. THEY BEHELD THE MAJESTY OF HIS COMING KINGDOM**A. EVIDENCED BY THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN...**

1. While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them - **Mt 17:5**
2. Peter, James, and John, fearfully entered the cloud - **Lk 9:34**
3. A voice came out of the cloud: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, Hear Him!" - **Mt 17:5; cf. 3:16-17**
 - a. This terrified the disciples - **Mt 17:6**
 - b. Jesus then sought to comfort them - **Mt 17:7**
4. The command, "Hear Him!"...
 - a. Implies that God would begin to speak through His Son, not the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah) - cf. **He 1:1-2**
 - b. That the rule and reign of God would be exercised through His Son, as He would be given all authority in heaven and earth - cf. **Mt 28:18**
5. Of course, this rule and reign (i.e., Christ's kingdom) would begin after Christ suffered (i.e., His death) and entered into glory (i.e., His ascension) - cf. **Lk 24:26**
 - a. Which explains why He told them to tell no one the vision until after His resurrection - **Mt 17:9**
 - b. What they had witnessed was **a foretaste, a foreshadowing** of His coming glory and rule in His kingdom!

B. EVIDENCED BY THE ABSENCE OF MOSES AND ELIJAH...

1. After hearing the voice, and lifting up their eyes, only Jesus was present - **Mt 17:8; Mk 9:8**
2. Perhaps symbolizing what the voice clearly declared: that Jesus was the one they were to hear, not Moses and Elijah who likely represented the Law and the Prophets

CONCLUSION

1. Truly "**They Beheld His Majesty**"...
 - a. They beheld the majesty of His person
 - 1) Transfigured before them
 - 2) Exalted even above Moses and Elijah
 - b. They beheld the majesty of His coming kingdom
 - 1) Acknowledged from heaven as God's beloved Son

- 2) The One whom all should heed, for all authority would be given to Him
2. What is the significance of this event...?
 - a. It may be the fulfillment Jesus' statement recorded in **Mt 16:28; Mk 9:1; Lk 9:27**
 - 1) That some would see the Son of Man "coming" in His kingdom
 - 2) That some would see the kingdom of God "present" with power
 - 3) That some would see the kingdom of God (i.e., His rule or reign)
 - b. If such is the case, what they saw was a foretaste of His kingdom or rule...
 - 1) Which would not be fully exercised until after His death and resurrection - cf. **Ep 1:20-23; 1 Pe 3:22**
 - 2) Which would include that day in which He will judge the world! - cf. **Ac 17:30-31; Mt 16:27**
 3. In any case, all of the events at the mount contributed to giving Jesus what Peter later described as "honor" and "glory" from the Father - **2 Pe 1:17**
 - a. The glorious transfiguration of Christ
 - b. The presence (and their subsequent absence) of Moses and Elijah
 - c. The voice from heaven, acknowledging Christ as God's Son
 4. What does God desire of us today...?
 - a. Not tabernacles or temples erected in the memory of His Son
 - b. But for us to simply obey what God said at the mount: "Hear Him!"

If we desire to add to the honor and glory that Jesus so richly deserves, and to one day behold His majesty in heaven, then let be careful to heed what He himself said regarding His authority:

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." - Mt 28:18-20

Jesus And The Children

Matthew 18:1-14

INTRODUCTION

1. One of the more touching and endearing scenes during the life of Jesus was when He used a little child to teach His disciples some lessons - **Mt 18:1-14**
2. For all who would be true disciples of Jesus, there are valuable lessons to be gleaned from this passage

[The first thing we are taught is...]

I. THE NECESSITY OF CONVERSION (1-4)

A. WITHOUT CONVERSION, THERE IS NO SALVATION...

1. "Unless you are converted", Jesus said
 - a. "You will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven"
 - b. For without conversion, we cannot have our sins blotted out - cf. **Ac 3:19**
 - b. And we will not enjoy "times of refreshing from the Lord" - cf. **Ac 3:19**
 2. Note that this process of conversion is passive: "be converted"
 - a. I.e., it is something you must allow to be done to you
 - b. It begins when we in faith submit to "the working of God"
 - 1) That is, baptism - cf. **Co 2:12**
 - 2) Wherein by God's mercy we experience "regeneration", "renewal" - **Ti 3:5**
 - c. It continues as we live the Christian life
 - 1) God continues His working in us - cf. **Ph 1:6; 2:12-13**
 - 2) He will do so until the coming of Christ - **1 Th 5:23-24**
- **Have you, indeed are you, submitting to the working of God in your life so as to be truly converted?**

B. A CONVERSION INVOLVING CHILDLIKE HUMILITY...

1. This was the concern of Jesus in **Mt 18:4**
 - a. For His disciples had been arguing over who would be greatest
 - b. Jesus used a child to illustrate the sort of humility one must have
 2. Paul later used Jesus as an example of humility - **Ph 2:3-5**
- **Those who submit to the working of God in their lives will produce this kind of humility necessary for salvation - cf. Co 3:12-13**

[The next thing we learn from this passage is...]

II. THE SIN OF STUMBLING BLOCKS (5-7)

A. WHO ARE THE "CHILDREN"...?

1. Some think Jesus used an infant to make his point about humility, and is now discussing His adult disciples
2. But the Greek word for "child" (paidion) can refer to one as old as twelve years - cf. **Mk**

5:39-42

- **I understand Jesus to be discussing children old enough to believe, old enough to sin - Mt 18:6**

B. THE TERRIBLENESS OF CAUSING CHILDREN TO SIN...

1. It would be better to be killed by drowning - **Mt 18:6**
2. “Woe to that man...” - **Mt 18:7**
3. Why so terrible? Because it is a sin against Christ Himself!
 - a. Note **Mt 18:5** and consider its opposite
 - b. Paul learned this lesson on the road to Damascus - **Ac 9:4-5**
 - c. He taught this truth to brethren in Corinth - **1 Co 8:9-13**

C. HOW ONE CAN PUT STUMBLING BLOCKS IN A CHILD’S WAY...

1. By doing anything to keep them from serving Christ freely
 2. Directly, by persecuting, ridiculing, opposing, or dissuading them from serving the Lord
 3. Indirectly, by living a life inconsistent with what we claim to be!
- **Are we putting stumbling blocks before our children, even unwittingly?**

[The next thing we can glean from these verses is...]

III. THE REALITY OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT (8-9)

A. SOME DENY PUNISHMENT AFTER DEATH, BUT NOT JESUS...

1. E.g., Seventh-Day Adventists and Members of the Watchtower Society (JWs)
 2. Yet Jesus, more than any other, taught the reality of an eternal, suffering place of torment!
 - a. The word “Gehenna” is used twelve times in Scripture, all but once by Jesus!
 - b. Elsewhere He mentions “everlasting fire” and “everlasting punishment” - **Mt 25:41,46**
 - c. And so did His disciples - **He 10:26-29; Re 21:8**
 3. Consider the implication of **Mt 18:6** and **He 10:28-29...**
 - a. What could be worse than drowning in the sea or dying without mercy?
 - b. According to those who deny punishment after death...nothing!
- **Dare we “water down” what Jesus and the Bible teaches about the destiny of the wicked?**

B. WE SHOULD THEREFORE TAKE SIN SERIOUSLY...

1. So much so, that we remove whatever is close and dear to us if it causes us to sin!
 2. Jesus is using hyperbole, of course, for what good would it be to pluck out only one eye?
- **Sin is like cancer; sometimes “radical surgery” is the only solution!**

[Finally, we are taught in this passage about...]

IV. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF GOD’S CHILDREN (10-14)

A. THEIR ANGELS ALWAYS BEHOLD GOD’S FACE...

1. What this may involve, one can only speculate
 - a. Many think this refers to “guardian angels” - cf. **Psa 91:9-12**
 - b. We do know that angels are “ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation” - **He 1:14**
2. Our text speaks of their presence before God - **Mt 18:10**

- a. Which some take to refer to their readiness to carry out the Father's wishes (Matthew Henry, Adam Clarke)
 - b. At the very least we know there is joy in their presence when sinners repent - **Lk 15:10**
 - c. Will they not be dismayed when one of God's children sin, or is made to stumble by others?
- **Their close proximity to God in heaven suggest the honor God has toward those children who believe!**

B. THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SAVE THEM...

1. Jesus came to die for them, too! - **Mt 18:11**
 2. Jesus illustrated His concern for them with the parable of the lost sheep - **Mt 18:12-13**
- **If Jesus was willing to give His life for them, dare we despise or neglect them?**

C. THE FATHER DOESN'T WANT TO LOSE EVEN ONE...

1. It is not His will - **Mt 18:14**
 2. Notice: He does not want to lose "one" of these little ones!
- **If both the Father and Son think so highly of these little ones, should not we?**

CONCLUSION

1. The words of Jesus should motivate us to take children more seriously...
 - a. **For parents:** how important to bring your child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!
 - b. **For teachers:** How serious and noble is your task of teaching our children!
 - c. **For all of us:** We are examples and role models, whether good or bad...and God will hold us accountable for the effect we have on them!
2. And for those who would enter the kingdom...
 - a. Heed the necessity of being converted!
 - b. Let the example of childlike trust and humility be a guide as to how we should serve God and one another!

Have you humbled yourself in obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ...?

Jesus On Divorce, Remarriage, And Celibacy

Matthew 19:3-12

INTRODUCTION

1. A serious problem in the world today is that of divorce and remarriage
2. As described by God, divorce is a treacherous, violent act - cf. **Mal 2:16**
 - a. Its affect on children has been well documented by **Judith Wallerstein**, author of *Second Chance* (Ticknor & Fields, 1988)
 - 1) Almost half of children of divorces enter adulthood as worried, underachieving, self-deprecating, and sometimes angry young men and women
 - 2) Half grew up in settings in which the parents were warring with each other even after the divorce-- Reported in *Time*, 2/6/89
 - b. Parents who divorce are not left unhurt either
 - 1) "A divorce is like an amputation: You survive, but there's less of you." - **Margaret Atwood** (*Marriage Partnership*, Vol. 7, No. 4)
 - 2) Average percentage change in a woman's standard of living the year following a divorce: minus 73% - **Daniel Evan Weiss**, (*The Great Divide*, Poseidon Press, 1991)
3. Remarriage after divorce is not without it problems also...
 - a. It does not always heal the wounds inflicted by the divorce: "I'm lucky my parents have stayed together. Unlike so many of my friends, I've never had to cry on a holiday." - **Tales Out of High School**, *Marriage Partnership*, Vol. 5, no. 6
 - b. Many remarriages are unlawful in God's eyes, constituting what Jesus called "adultery"
4. While I am concerned about the social and psychological effects of divorce and remarriage, it is the spiritual effects that concern me most...
 - a. Too many people are ignorant of what the Bible teaches on this subject
 - b. Such ignorance leads to quick and easy divorces, and to adulterous marriages that are unlawful
5. In **Mt 19:3-12**, we find Jesus discussing divorce, remarriage and celibacy...
 - a. His teaching was occasioned by a challenge from the Pharisees
 - b. But He used the opportunity to teach His disciples what people today need to know!

[As we consider this passage carefully, we find that Matthew first records...]

I. THE PHARISEES' QUESTION (3)

A. TO TEST HIM, NOT TO BE TAUGHT BY HIM...

1. Divorce was a touchy issue then, even as it is today
2. Divorce was not uncommon (e.g., King Herod)
3. The scribes were divided over the proper grounds for divorce
 - a. The school of Hillel taught that a man could divorce for just about any reason
 - b. The school of Shammai permitted divorce only in the case of fornication

B. ANY ANSWER JESUS GAVE WOULD OFFEND SOMEONE...

1. If He took the popular lax view, the Pharisees could deride His claim as a teacher of superior morality - cf. **Mt 5:20**
2. If He upheld the stricter view, He would be unpopular with the majority (which the Pharisees could use against Him)

[Of course, Jesus was not concerned with what man thought, but in pleasing His Father in heaven. This becomes evident as we next consider...]

II. JESUS' ANSWER (4-6)

A. HE APPEALS TO THE WORD OF GOD...

1. "Have you not read...?" - **Mt 19:4; cf. Gen 1:27; 2:24**
2. He does not place stock in the opinions of religious leaders of the day
- **Is there not something for us to learn here? Where should we go to find the answer concerning the issue of divorce?**

B. HE REMINDS THEM OF THEIR GENESIS...

1. "He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female'..." - **Mt 19:4**
2. It is helpful to keep in mind:
 - a. Where we came from
 - b. Who created us
 - c. What we are
3. For our views on divorce and remarriage will be influenced by our views of ourselves!
 - a. Are we simply animals?
 - 1) Compelled by instinct?
 - 2) Unable to control fleshly desires?
 - Then divorce and remarriage ought to be free and easy
 - b. Or God's highest creation?
 - 1) Made in His image?
 - 2) Able to control fleshly lusts to the glory of God?
 - Then divorce and remarriage ought to reflect God's desire for man's holiness!

C. HE ATTRIBUTES THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE TO GOD, NOT MAN...

1. Notice, it was GOD who said "For this reason..." - **Mt 19:5; cf. Gen 2:24**
2. Therefore questions about marriage (such as divorce and remarriage) must be answered by God, not by man (nor by man's laws)!

D. HE EMPHASIZES THAT IN MARRIAGE GOD CREATES A UNION...

1. The two become one flesh - **Mt 19:5-6; cf. Gen 2:24**
2. They are joined by none other than God Himself!

E. HIS CONCLUSION: LET NOT MAN SEPARATE WHAT GOD JOINED...

1. What GOD has joined together, let not MAN separate - **Mt 19:6**
2. Man has no right to separate what God Himself has joined

[It is clear that God's intention is that marriage is to be for life! It is God who joins the couple, and no one has the right to rend asunder what God has joined together! Are there no exceptions to this rule? The Pharisees thought so, as we now notice...]

III. THE PHARISEES' REBUTTAL (7)

A. THEIR REBUTTAL APPEARS BASED ON THE WORD OF GOD...

1. Jesus had urged scriptural reasons against divorce - **Mt 19:4-6**
2. They allege scriptural authority for divorce - **Mt 19:7**

B. THEIR APPEAL TO SCRIPTURE WAS ON SHAKY GROUNDS...

1. They appealed to Moses' statement in **Deu 24:1-4**
2. Which they took to permit divorce as long as a "certificate of divorce" was given to the wife - cf. **Mt 5:31**
3. Yet a careful reading of that passage reveals:
 - a. Moses was forbidding the remarriage of a spouse who marries someone else
 - b. The reason was despite the "certificate" the woman became "defiled" when she remarried - **Deu 24:4**
 - c. The word "defiled" used elsewhere to describe adultery - **Lev 18:20; Num 5:13-14**
 - d. She actually became an adulteress by the remarriage! - cf. **Ro 7:1-3**
4. While they appealed to this passage in divorce (and presumably, remarriage), it actually described the treachery of divorce: defilement of the spouse- cf. **Mt 5:32**

[The shakiness of their rebuttal is seen more clearly as we consider...]

IV. JESUS' RESPONSE (8-9)

A. MOSES "PERMITTED" DIVORCE DUE TO THEIR HARD HEARTS...

1. The Jews at that time were a hardened people - cf. **Deu 9:6; 31:27**
2. Is this not a commentary on the state of one's heart when they desire to divorce their spouse?
 - a. It takes a hardhearted person to want to divorce their spouse
 - 1) Either to divorce arbitrarily (for no scriptural grounds)
 - 2) Or to divorce when the guilty person is pleading for forgiveness and reconciliation
 - b. Of course, that is exactly the condition of those in the world (or those in the church who are of the world) - cf. **Ep 4:17-19**

B. IT WAS NOT WHAT GOD HAD IN MIND FROM THE BEGINNING...

1. The permission to divorce was only temporary
2. Note carefully:
 - a. The Law of Moses (which was temporary) considered the hardness of men's hearts, and permitted hardhearted actions
 - b. The gospel of Christ cures the hardness of one's heart!
 - 1) His grace removes the heart of stone, and replaces it with a heart of love!
 - 2) I.e., a heart able to abide by God's original design for marriage
3. Paul would later make it clear that under normal conditions divorce is not an option - **1 Co 7:10-11**

C. JESUS SETTLED THE POINT WITH AN AUTHORITATIVE "SAYING"...

1. "And I say unto you..." - **Mt 19:9**
 - a. His sayings were with authority - cf. **Mt 7:28-29**
 - b. Upon which He expected people to base their lives - cf. **Mt 7:24-25; 28:20**

2. Divorce is allowed only in the case of fornication - **Mt 19:9**
 - a. Divorce for any other reason results in adultery when there is remarriage
 - b. Which is what Jesus taught in **Mt 5:32**
3. To marry a divorced (put away) person results in adultery
 - a. Does this apply only to a person put away for a cause other than fornication?
 - b. Or to the one who is guilty of fornication?
 - c. The lack of the definite article would suggest any “put away” person
 - 1) Either an innocent person wrongly “put away”
 - 2) Or a guilty person rightly “put away” for fornication

D. OBSERVATIONS...

1. **Any divorce must be on those grounds specified by Jesus...**
 - a. For marriage is an institution ordained by God - **Mt 19:5**
 - b. And must not separate what God has joined together - **Mt 19:6**
2. **A divorce for any other grounds...**
 - a. Is an attempt to separate what God has joined together
 - b. Results in a remarriage where people commit adultery - **Mt 19:9**; cf. **Mk 10:11-12**
3. **Jesus’ teaching was contrary to two views held by the Jews of His day...**
 - a. That as long as a “bill of divorcement” was given, they were free to divorce and remarry for any reason
 - 1) Consider **Mt 5:31** as an example of their belief
 - 2) Yet Jesus taught:
 - a) To divorce for any reason other than fornication causes the spouse to commit adultery - **Mt 5:32**
 - b) To divorce and remarry for any reason other than fornication is to commit adultery - **Mt 19:9**
 - b. That they could marry a woman who was divorced (with the exception of the priests - cf. **Lev 21:7,14**)
 - 1) Yet Jesus taught that to marry a divorced woman was to commit adultery!
 - 2) Again, the lack of the definite article in both **Mt 5:32** and **Mt 19:9** indicates:
 - a) Whether the woman was put away for the right reason or not
 - b) In either case, the end result is adultery!
4. **Jesus defined the meaning of adultery...**
 - a. It was common at that time to believe:
 - 1) A man was guilty of adultery only if he violated another man’s wife
 - 2) He could be married, have relations with a single woman, and not be guilty of adultery
 - b. Jesus defined adultery to include:
 - 1) Sex with the spouse of another (the standard definition)
 - 2) Looking at a woman to lust for her - **Mt 5:27-28**
 - 3) Marrying a person who was divorced by their spouse - **Mt 5:32; 19:9**
 - 4) Remarrying when one did not divorce for fornication - **Mt 19:9**

[As one might expect, what Jesus said created strong reactions. While we do not know how the Pharisees reacted, we do know...]

V. THE DISCIPLES’ REACTION (10)

A. IF DIVORCE IS ALLOWED FOR ONLY ONE REASON...

1. It is better not to marry! - **Mt 19:10**
2. The single life would be preferable to being so bound to one's wife!

B. CONTRAST THIS WITH THE REACTION OF MANY TODAY...

1. **The disciples of Jesus:**
 - a. "If such is the case with divorce and remarriage, it is better to be single!"
 - b. With them, there was no question about obeying Christ's law on this subject
 - c. Only that in view of His teaching, the preferable option is celibacy
2. **Many people today:**
 - a. "If such is the case with divorce and remarriage, it is better to be lost!"
 - b. Rather than submit to scriptural marriage or celibacy, many people are more likely to opt for eternal damnation!
 - c. Choosing to prefer a few years of adultery over an eternity of bliss!

[With the disciples' mention of celibacy as a viable option, Jesus used the opportunity to speak on the subject as it related to His previous "saying" or teaching...]

VI. JESUS' REPLY REGARDING CELIBACY (11-12)

A. NOT EVERY ONE CAN ACCEPT THIS "SAYING"...

1. I.e., the saying of **Mt 19:9**
2. The saying of Jesus regarding divorce and remarriage

B. WHO CAN ACCEPT IT...?

1. "those to whom it has been given" - **Mt 19:11**
2. "he who is able to receive it" - **Mt 19:12**

C. WHO MIGHT THESE BE...?

1. Those willing to accept it "**for** the kingdom of heaven's sake" - **Mt 19:12**
 - a. The kingdom of heaven means that much to them
 - b. They are willing to do whatever necessary to enter it
2. Even it means making themselves "eunuchs" - **Mt 19:12**
 - a. I.e., remaining single, even though they were not "born thus from their mother's womb"
 - b. In order to remain true to the teaching of Jesus
3. That such sacrifices might occur is implied in **Mk 10:29-30; Lk 14:26**
 - a. One must put Christ before all others, including one's spouse
 - b. Doing so may even cause one to leave their spouse
 - c. Yet the only situation in which one would be justified in doing so...
 - 1) Would be if their marriage was unscriptural
 - 2) For otherwise one is not to leave their spouse - cf. **1 Co 7:10-11**
4. For those willing to live the celibate life if it is necessary...
 - a. They will receive the ability to live by His Will - cf. **Ph 4:13; Ep 3:20**
 - b. They can provide more service to the Lord being single - cf. **1 Co 7:32-35**
 ...just as many single and widowed serve the Lord faithfully in celibacy!

CONCLUSION

1. Any view of divorce and remarriage must take into consideration...
 - a. The Word of God

- b. The nature of man and woman
 - c. The sanctity of the union between man and woman created by God
 - d. The consequences of rebelling against God, trying to separate what He has joined
 - e. The value of entering “the kingdom of heaven”
2. The only course for faithful Christians is to comply with the teachings of Jesus...
- a. That divorce:
 - 1) Is an indication of one’s hardness of heart
 - 2) Puts the spouse in a position to commit adultery when they remarry
 - 3) Causes one who has divorced their spouse to commit adultery when they remarry
 - b. That there is only one ground for divorce and remarriage:
 - 1) Which is fornication
 - 2) In which the innocent person has the right to divorce and remarry
 - c. That celibacy is a viable option:
 - 1) For those who desire to enter the kingdom of heaven
 - 2) Who may find it necessary to “make themselves eunuchs” (remain celibate) to do so
3. For those who find themselves in “unlawful” (i.e., adulterous marriages - cf. **Mk 6:17-18**), there is forgiveness through the blood of Jesus...
- a. But as with any sin, forgiveness is conditioned upon repentance
 - b. Just as the Jews who had married foreign wives needed to repent by putting them away (cf. **Ezra 9-10**)
 - c. So one repents by leaving any relationship described as adultery

May the Lord bless those with the faith to live according to His word, and may we be diligent in teaching our children what the Bible teaches regarding divorce and remarriage!

The Difficulty With Riches

Matthew 19:16-26

INTRODUCTION

1. A well known story in the life of Jesus involves His interview with a rich young ruler - **Mt 19:16-26; Lk 18:18-27**
2. In this story we find a man who was so right, yet wrong...
 - a. He came to the right person - **Mt 19:16**
 - 1) He came to Jesus
 - 2) Who could tell Him the way to eternal life
 - b. He asked the right questions - **Mt 19:16b,20**
 - 1) "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"
 - 2) "What do I still lack?"
 - c. He certainly received the right answers - **Mt 19:17-19,21**
 - 1) "...if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (suitable for one living under the OT covenant)
 - 2) "If you want to be perfect, go, sell...give to the poor...and come, follow Me" (fitting for one who would become a disciple and follow Jesus during His ministry)
 - d. But in the end, he made the wrong decision - **Mt 19:22**
 - 1) He went away sorrowful
 - 2) For he had great possessions
3. As rich young ruler went away sadly, Jesus told His disciples about the difficulty of riches...
 - a. That it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God - **Mt 19:23**
 - b. That it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle - **Mt 19:24**
4. What is it about being rich that makes salvation so difficult...?
 - a. Are we aware of the dangers of riches?
 - b. Do we understand the proper attitudes toward wealth, whether we are rich or poor?

[Let's first consider...]

I. THE DIFFICULTY WITH RICHES

A. THE ABSORBING INTEREST OF RICHES...

1. Riches do not satisfy, and we foolishly think that simply more riches will bring satisfaction - cf. **Ecc 1:8; 5:10**
2. With riches comes the preoccupation with them: how to use, maintain, store, etc.
-- **Like a black hole, the accumulation of riches can absorb what time and energy we have so that we have little for anything else (such as family, church, the Lord)**

B. THE DECEITFUL PROMISE OF RICHES...

1. Jesus warned about the deceitfulness of riches - **Mt 13:22**
2. Riches promise much, but really offer little in return
 - a. They can easily disappear, rust, or be stolen - **Pro 23:5; Mt 6:19**

- b. They cannot buy one's salvation - **Psa 49:6-9,16-20**
- c. Neither can they protect one from God's wrath - **Zeph 1:18**
- **Riches can deceive one into thinking they are in need of nothing; the parable of the rich fool illustrates the folly of such thinking - Lk 12:16-21**

C. THE FOOLISH PRIDE OF RICHES...

- 1. Wealth tends to promote a sense of arrogance and pride - cf. **Deu 8:11-17**
- 2. It was such pride that was the downfall of Sodom and Israel - **Ezek 16:49-50; Hos 13:4-6**
- **Blinded by such pride, one will not seek God - Psa 10:4**

D. THE HARDENING SELFISHNESS OF RICHES...

- 1. The wealthy, while in a position to help others, often close their hearts to the cry of the poor
- 2. This was one of Israel's sins - **Amo 2:6; 5:11-12; 8:4-6**
- **Abusing the poor to make money, failing to respond to their cries for justice, interested more in money than the welfare of the poor, such are the problems that often afflict the rich**

[Certainly not all who are rich are guilty of such things. Some of the most godly people in the Bible were rich (Job, Abraham, Joseph, David, Solomon, Barnabas, Philemon, Lydia). But these are reasons why it is so hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. If they let mammon become their god, they will not be willing to serve the true God! (cf. **Mt 6:24**) From what we have seen about the danger of wealth, let's now draw some...]

II. LESSONS GLEANED FROM THE DIFFICULTY OF RICHES

A. THE FOLLY OF COVETOUSNESS...

- 1. Why be so anxious to be rich, when riches might prove to be a curse for us?
- 2. Besides, covetousness is viewed by God as a form of idolatry - **Ep 5:5; Co 3:5**
- 3. It not a sin to be rich, but the **desire** to be rich is wrong
 - a. Those who desire to be rich will fall into temptation, and not go unpunished - **1 Ti 6:9; Pro 28:20**
 - b. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil - **1 Ti 6:10**
 - 1) For which some have strayed from the faith
 - 2) And suffered many sorrows

B. THE DUTY OF CONTENTMENT...

- 1. Contentment along with godliness is true wealth - **1 Ti 6:6-7**
 - a. "He is richest who is content with the least." - **Socrates** (470-399 B.C.)
 - b. "Contentment comes not so much from great wealth as from few wants" - **Croft M. Pentz** (The Complete Book of Zingers)
- 2. Contentment is a virtue that is learned - e.g., **Ph 4:11-12**
 - a. By having a proper perspective on life - **1 Ti 6:7**
 - 1) "You can't take it with you"
 - 2) Ever see a hearse pulling a U-Haul trailer?
 - b. By understanding what is truly essential in life - **1 Ti 6:8**
 - 1) Food and clothing...anything more is a luxury
 - 2) Realizing this, we will appreciate how blessed we are!
- 3. Therefore Christians are to be content with what things we have - **He 13:5**

C. THE NEED FOR SYMPATHY FOR THE RICH...

1. Jesus loved the rich young ruler - **Mk 10:21**
 - a. We should certainly love those who are rich
 - b. We should not be envious, nor despise them
2. If the rich are overcome by their riches, we should remember...
 - a. That the desire to be rich affects both the rich and those who want to be rich
 - b. That the rich face many temptations that the poor do not
3. The rich are in need of salvation as much as the poorest beggar - **Ro 3:23; 6:23**

D. FAITH IN THE POWER OF GOD...

1. Though it is hard for a rich person to be saved, it is not impossible - **Mt 19:23-26**
 - a. No one can save themselves, whether rich or poor
 - b. But God can save the rich by His own power, through the gospel - **Ro 1:16-17**
2. There were many rich people who became Jesus' disciples
 - a. Those that supported Him during His earthly ministry - **Lk 8:1-3**
 - b. Others such as Zaccheus, Matthew, Barnabas, Lydia, Aquila and Priscilla, Gaius, Philemon
 - c. Such people used their riches in service to God and others - cf. **1 Ti 6:17-19**
3. Therefore...
 - a. The rich should have the gospel preached to them
 - b. We should pray for the rich
 - c. We should rejoice greatly that there are rich men and women in the kingdom of God

CONCLUSION

1. The issue of wealth and riches is often one of contention...
 - a. The poor are often envious of the rich
 - b. The rich often despise the poor
2. But riches and poverty both have their difficulties...
 - a. Wealth can make one arrogant, less receptive to the gospel and the kingdom
 - b. Poverty can make one bitter, filled with envy of others
3. Whether rich or poor, we all should be aware...
 - a. Of our need for salvation that comes only by the grace of God
 - b. That we can share together in the riches of salvation

Have you become an heir to the "unsearchable riches of Christ"?

Served By Greatness, Serve To Be Great

Matthew 20:20-28

INTRODUCTION

1. What good mother does not desire the best for her children?
 - a. The mother of James and John was no different
 - b. She desired great things for her two sons - **Mt 20:20-21**
2. Yet she was not aware of the significance of what she was asking Jesus...
 - a. Serving in His kingdom would require great sacrifice and suffering - **Mt 20:22-23**
 - b. Her request could only be granted by the Father - **Mt 20:23**
3. This request in behalf of James and John displeased the other apostles - **Mt 20:24**
 - a. Upon which Jesus used this opportunity to teach an important lesson - **Mt 20:25-28**
 - b. I.e., to be great in the kingdom one must serve, even as the Son of Man came to serve

[This is a lesson every Christian needs to remember, yet it goes against what the world would have us believe. To encourage us in being willing to serve, perhaps it would help to recall that we have been...]

I. WE HAVE BEEN SERVED BY GREATNESS

A. SERVED BY JESUS...

1. He came to serve, not to be served - **Mt 20:28**
2. He served by giving His life a ransom, dying on the cross for our sins
3. He serves even now, as our High Priest who intercedes for us - **He 7:24-25**

B. SERVED BY THE PROPHETS...

1. The prophets spent their lives in service for our benefit - **1 Pe 1:10-12**
2. Thus we have been served by men like Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and many other “heroes of faith”!

C. SERVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT...

1. It was the Holy Spirit who inspired the prophets - **1 Pe 1:11**
2. He also inspired the apostles to reveal the gospel - **1 Pe 1:12; Jn 16:13**

D. SERVED BY THE APOSTLES...

1. They are the ones who preached the gospel to us - **1 Pe 1:12**
2. Through them, we have come to believe in Jesus - cf. **Jn 17:20**
3. Thus we have been served by men like Peter, James, John, and Paul, who suffered greatly in their ministry to us! - cf. **1 Co 4:9-13; 2 Co 11:24-29**

E. SERVED BY ANGELS...

1. They had a keen interest in the things being revealed - **1 Pe 1:12**
2. For they had a part in the process of revelation - cf. **Dan 8, 9; Lk 1:11-19,26-38**
3. Thus they too have ministered to us - cf. **He 1:13-14**

F. SERVED BY OTHER CHRISTIANS...

1. Someone taught us the gospel, others continue to teach us and our children
2. Some made it possible for us to assemble, and each week clean up what we leave behind
3. In times of sickness, many have prayed and rendered various forms of service

[With so many rendering so much service, it is easy to feel pampered. Indeed, we have been “**served by greatness**”! Do we take it for granted? I hope not. We can show our appreciation by emulating those who served us. So let me just offer a few ways that we can...]

II. LET US SERVE TO BE GREAT

A. SERVE IN EVANGELISM...

1. Someone led you to Christ, can you not lead another to Him? - cf. **Jn 1:35-42**
2. Begin by being hospitable, offering acts of kindness and service
3. At the very least, invite to services, offer a Bible correspondence course
4. Hone your skills in personal evangelism, seek to improve your ability to share the gospel

B. SERVE IN EDIFICATION...

1. Many have contributed to your spiritual growth, can you help others? - cf. **Ep 4:16**
2. Begin by being present at every service, greeting every one present
3. Take a special interest in those who are new, encourage them
4. Offer to help teach our children, even if it only means to assist another teacher
5. Volunteer whatever service you can render in the work and worship of the church

C. SERVE IN BENEVOLENCE...

1. Has anyone ever showed you kindness? “Be kind to one another” - cf. **Ep 4:32**
2. Visit the sick or elderly in hospitals, and at home
3. Render service such as cleaning, transportation, errands, etc.
4. Minister to the poor, hungry, or those otherwise in need

CONCLUSION

1. The important thing is that we be people of service...
 - a. People who serve others, not just benefiting from the efforts of others
 - b. People who are producers, not just consumers
2. Serving others is not just the path to greatness in the kingdom, it is also the path to happiness in life:

“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” (Ac 20:35)

Shall we not follow both the example and teaching of the Son of Man, and live to serve others...?

Does Your Temple Need Cleaning?

Matthew 21:12-14

INTRODUCTION

1. Shortly after entering Jerusalem at the beginning of His final week, Jesus entered the temple - **Mt 21:12-14**
 - a. Angered by the presence of the moneychangers and merchants, He drove them out
 - b. He decried their turning the house of God into a den of thieves
 - c. With the temple cleansed, He then healed blind and lame
2. Jesus had cleansed the temple before - **Jn 2:13-17**
 - a. It was during the Passover, three years before
 - b. Then He rebuked them for making the house of God a house of merchandise
3. In both cases, we see Jesus' anger for their misuse of the temple...
 - a. Not that there was anything inherently wrong with buying and selling
 - b. But it was not the proper place, or use of the temple
4. How about your temple?
 - a. Is it being properly used?
 - b. Does it need cleaning?
 - c. Are you aware that you even have a temple?

[Yes, you do have a temple. As with the temple in Jerusalem, it is to be used in the service and praise of God. If it is not, then it too needs a cleaning! What am I talking about...?]

I. YOUR BODY IS A TEMPLE

A. A TEMPLE FOR GOD TO INDWELL...

1. Your physical body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who in you - **1 Co 6:19**
 - a. This "indwelling" refers to a special relationship between you and the Spirit
 - 1) By which God strengthens you - cf. **Ep 3:16**
 - 2) By whom we can deal with the power of sin - cf. **Ro 8:11-13**
 - b. For as Solomon recognized with the temple in Jerusalem, no physical dwelling can contain the omnipresent God - cf. **2 Chr 6:18**
 - c. Yet the uniqueness of the Spirit's presence in the life of a Christian is such that it is proper to speak of Him "indwelling" the Christian - cf. **Ga 4:6**
2. What is said of the physical body, is also said of the church as a whole - **1 Co 3:16**
3. What is said of the church as a temple, is also true of the body - **1 Co 3:17**
 - a. Defile the temple of God, and you incur the wrath of God!
 - b. The temple is to be holy!

B. A TEMPLE FOR DEVOTED SERVICE TO GOD...

1. The temple of Jerusalem was to be a place of prayer - cf. **Mt 21:13; 2 Chr 6:19-21**
2. So your temple, including both body and mind, is to be devoted in service to God
 - a. Your body is to be a living sacrifice - **Ro 12:1; cf. Co 3:5-9**

- b. Your mind is to be renewed, focused on things above - **Ro 12:2**; cf. **Co 3:1-2**

C. A TEMPLE THAT CAN BE ABUSED...

1. We have seen how the temple in Jerusalem was abused
 - a. A place designed for prayer, turned into a marketplace
 - b. A place that need to be cleansed, once and again
2. The same can be true of our temples...
 - a. We can become guilty of setting our minds on earthly things
 - 1) We begin serving our bellies (fleshly appetites), rather than Jesus - **Ph 3:18-19**
 - 2) We find ourselves unable to abide by will of God - **Ro 8:5-8**
 - b. We can begin offering our bodies to that which it does not belong
 - 1) Some which is inherently sinful - cf. **1 Co 6:13-18**
 - 2) Other things (cares, riches, pleasures of life) which detract us from our true service and hinder our ability to serve God with our bodies - cf. **Lk 8:14**

[What is the condition of your temple? Perhaps you are in need of a “major overhaul” (salvation). Perhaps you need some “spring cleaning” (restoration and rededication). In either case, the principles for cleaning are similar...]

II. WHAT YOU NEED TO BE CLEANSED

A. THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST...

1. Jesus is an expert at “temple-cleansing”!
2. Even more so, when it comes to cleansing the temples of our bodies and spirits
 - a. He knows that it must occur from the inside out - cf. **Mt 23:25-27**
 - b. He died, that He might purify us - **Ti 2:11-14**
 - c. His blood is the cleansing power to purify us from all sin - **1 Jn 1:7**
3. How do we ensure the presence of Christ in our “temples”?
 - a. Through faith - **Ep 3:17**
 - b. Through obedience - **Jn 14:21,23; 1 Pe 1:22**
4. For the non-Christian, such faith and obedience includes baptism
 - a. For baptism unites us with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed - **Ro 6:3-4**
 - b. For in baptism we put on Christ - **Ga 3:27**
5. For the Christian in need of cleansing, faithful obedience includes repentance and prayer - cf. **Ac 8:22**
 - a. Repentance, as Christ counseled the Laodiceans - **Rev 3:14-19**
 - b. Prayer, through which the Lord is allowed back into our hearts - **Rev 3:20**

B. THE POWER OF CHRIST...

1. Jesus exercised strength to overturn the tables and drive out the merchants
2. Even more so, does He offer strength for the Christian
 - a. Without Him, we can do nothing - **Jn 15:4-5**
 - b. With Him, we can do everything - **Ph 4:13**
3. Thus we need to stand strong “in the power of His might” - **Ep 6:10; Co 1:11**; cf. **Isa 40:29-31; 41:10**

C. OUR PARTICIPATION WITH CHRIST...

1. While we are dependent upon Christ for our cleansing, we cannot sit by idly
 - a. We must “cleanse ourselves” - **2 Co 7:1**

- b. We must “pursue holiness” - **He 12:14**
2. This involves both “putting off” and “putting on” things in our life
 - a. As counseled by James - **Ja 1:21**
 - b. As instructed by Peter - **1 Pe 2:1-2**
 - c. As commanded by Paul - **Ep 4:22-32; Co 3:8-14**
3. Our cleansing will be greatly facilitated by what we allow in our minds
 - a. For with things that worthy of praise and virtue will ensure God’s presence in our lives - **Ph 4:8-9**
 - b. Our transformation will take place as our minds are renewed - **Ro 12:1-2**

CONCLUSION

1. In what condition is your “temple”...?
 - a. Is it a place where God, Jesus, and the Spirit can reside?
 - b. Is your body and mind “a place of prayer”, one that brings glory to God?
-- **Or have you allowed the mundane things of life so preoccupy your “temple” that it is not what God intended, a place that is common and profane?**
2. If your temple needs cleansing, then look to Jesus...
 - a. Only He can provide the cleansing you need
 - b. But He also provides power for godly living
3. But be careful that you do not just let Jesus cleanse your temple and nothing else...
 - a. For cleansing without replacement can make thing worse - cf. **Mt 12:43-45**
 - b. Therefore we must fill our “temples” with prayer, praise, virtue, and godliness
 - c. Otherwise our “temples” will soon be filled with **idols**

Do not forget the words of the apostle Paul:

“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.’ Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”
(2 Co 6:16-7:1)

Are you participating with Christ in your cleansing, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God?

Is It From Heaven Or From Men?

Matthew 21:23-27

INTRODUCTION

1. While teaching in the temple, Jesus was confronted by the chief priests and elders...
 - a. They questioned His authority to teach - **Mt 21:23**
 - b. Jesus saw through their hypocrisy, and challenged them regarding the authority behind the baptism of John - **Mt 21:24-25a**
 - c. Since they would not be honest in their answer, Jesus refused to answer their question - **Mt 21:25b-27**

2. In the process of exposing their hypocrisy, Jesus revealed an important principle regarding authority in matters of religion...
 - a. All religious practices must come from one of two sources
 - b. They come either from heaven, or from men - **Mt 23:25**

3. What Jesus asked regarding John's baptism, could be asked of many religious practices...
 - a. Infant baptism
 - b. Sprinkling or pouring instead of immersion
 - c. Denominationalism, a clergy-laity distinction
 - d. The impossibility of apostasy, observing the Sabbath
 - e. Instrumental music, burning of incense, etc., in our worship

-- **Are such practices from heaven, or from men?**

[In this study, we shall consider how one can know whether a particular religious practice is from heaven, or from man...]

I. TO BE FROM HEAVEN

A. IT MUST COME FROM JESUS...

1. For He has been given all authority - **Mt 28:18**
 2. Both in heaven and on earth
- **Certainly if Jesus commanded it, it is from heaven!**

B. IT MUST COME THROUGH HIS APOSTLES...

1. For Jesus delegated His authority to His apostles - **Jn 13:20**
 2. They serve as His official ambassadors - **2 Co 5:20**
 3. To ensure their reliability, Jesus promised the Spirit to remind them of what He taught, and to guide them into all the truth - **Jn 14:26; 16:12-13**
 4. This is why the church continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine - **Ac 2:42; 1 Co 14:37; 1 Th 2:13**
- **If the apostles of Christ taught it, it is from heaven!**

C. IT MUST COME ONLY FROM THE APOSTLES...

1. The apostles were given, and proclaimed, the whole counsel of God - **Ac 20:27**
2. They were given all things that pertain to life and godliness - **2 Pe 1:3**

3. The faith revealed through them was delivered once for all (lit., one time for all times) - **Ju 3**
- **There is no need for modern day revelations, for in the Scriptures we have all we need to be “complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” - 2 Ti 3:16-17**

[If a religious practice can be found to be taught by Jesus or His apostles, then it is truly from heaven! Religious practices that are from men, however, might come from a variety of sources...]

II. IT IS FROM MAN

A. IF BASED SOLELY UPON WHAT THE MAJORITY THINKS...

1. Many people will accept whatever most people think about something
2. Yet Jesus warned against following the majority - **Mt 7:13-14**
3. If you had followed the majority...
 - a. In Noah’s day, you would have perished in the flood
 - b. In Joshua’s day, you would have perished in the wilderness
- **What the majority believes or does is not likely to be from heaven, but from men!**

B. IF BASED SOLELY UPON WHAT PARENTS TAUGHT US...

1. Some believe “If it was good enough for Mom and Dad, it is good enough for me.”
2. As much as we may love and respect our parents, Christ must come first - **Mt 10:37**
3. If every generation had simply followed their parents, then we who are Gentiles would likely still be idol-worshippers and polytheistic!
- **Let us honor our parents, not by following them blindly, but by applying principles they themselves likely taught us, such as seek to do the right thing, obey God, etc.**

C. IF BASED SOLELY UPON WHAT PREACHERS TELL US...

1. It is common for people to place their trust in their “preacher,” “priest,” or “pastor”
2. They reason that surely these “men of God” could not be wrong or lead them astray
 - a. Yet Paul warned of how we can easily be misled - cf. **2 Co 11:13-15**
 - b. And Jesus warned about the “blind leading the blind” - **Mt 15:12-14**
3. Our attitude needs to be like that of the Bereans, who carefully examined Paul’s teachings in light of the Scriptures - **Ac 17:11**
- **What a preacher teaches is only as good as the authority behind it; unless we wish to led astray, we have the responsibility to ask “Is it from God, or men?”**

D. IF BASED SOLELY UPON CREEDS AND TRADITIONS OF MEN...

1. This is where the denominations really get most of their authority
 - a. E.g., for such things as infant baptism, pouring or sprinkling instead of immersion
 - b. E.g., for such things as denominationalism, once saved always saved
2. Indeed, adherence to the creeds of men is what produces denominations
 - a. Accept the Bible only, and you become a Christian only
 - b. Accept some man-made creed or tradition, and you become something else!
 - 1) Accept the Book of Mormon, and you become a Mormon
 - 2) Accept papal authority, and you become a Roman Catholic
 - 3) Accept the Lutheran Catechism, and you become a Lutheran
3. Creeds are really not even necessary...
 - a. If they say more than what the Bible says, they say too much
 - b. If they say less than what the Bible says, they say too little
 - c. If they say exactly what the Bible says, then why not let the Bible be our creed book?
- **The fact is creeds are filled with the traditions and commands of men, many of**

which conflict with and displace the commands of God! - cf. Mk 7:6-9

E. IF BASED SOLELY UPON WHAT YOUR CONSCIENCE TELLS YOU...

1. "Let your conscience be your guide" is the motto of many
 2. But our conscience cannot always be reliable
 - a. Paul had served God with a good conscience throughout his life - **Ac 23:1**
 - b. Even at a time when he was persecuting Christians! - cf. **Ac 26:9-11**
 3. Our conscience is like a clock, which works properly if set properly
 4. Once our conscience has been "set" by the "apostles' doctrine", then it can be a good guide
- **Unless what your conscience is telling you can be confirmed by the Word of God, then what you believe is from man, not God!**

F. IF BASED SOLELY UPON WHAT IS HUMAN WISDOM...

1. Many believe that through their own wisdom they can determine right and wrong
 - a. If it makes sense to them, they reason it must be true
 - b. If it doesn't make sense, they won't accept it
 2. But God's thoughts and ways are not always our own - cf. **Isa 55:8-9**
 3. In fact, God has chosen to save man in a manner specifically designed to confound those who depend solely upon human wisdom - cf. **1 Co 1:18-29**
 4. For us to know God's will, it was necessary for Him to reveal it to us - **1 Co 2:9-12**
 - a. This He has done through His Spirit-inspired apostles
 - b. Who in turn shared it with us through their writings - **Ep 3:1-5**
- **Appeal to human reason to justify a certain practice, and it will likely be from man, not God!**

G. IF BASED SOLELY UPON FEELINGS...

1. This is often the "standard of authority" for many people
 - a. Who go by whatever "feels right"
 - b. Who place stock in a religion "better felt than told"
 2. Yet the Bible declares the danger of trusting in "feelings"
 - a. "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." - **Pro 14:12**
 - b. "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool..." - **Pro 28:26**
 - c. "O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." - **Jer 10:23**
- **It should be evident that any religious practice or doctrine based upon "feelings" alone is from man, not God!**

H. IF BASED SOLELY UPON THE OLD TESTAMENT...

1. People will sometimes resort to the O. T. to provide authority for some practice
 - a. When they can't find authority for it in the teachings of Christ and/or His apostles
 - b. For example, a clergy-laity system, burning of incense and use of instrumental music in worship, keeping the Sabbath, etc.
2. But the O.T. was designed to be temporary, to fulfill a specific purpose and as a covenant has been replaced by the New Covenant (i.e., the New Testament)
 - a. It was given because of transgressions, till Christ should come - **Ga 3:19**
 - b. For those under the Law (Israel), it was a tutor
 - 1) A tutor designed to lead them to Christ - **Ga 3:24**
 - 2) A tutor that has been taken away - **Ga 3:25**

- c. When those who were under the Law came to Christ...
 - 1) They became dead to the Law - **Ro 7:4**
 - 2) They were delivered from the Law - **Ro 7:6**
- d. As prophesied by Jeremiah, God has made a “new covenant” to replace the “first covenant” which is now obsolete - **He 8:7-13**
3. In handling of the issue of circumcision, the apostles demonstrated that one cannot use the O.T. to teach something which the apostles themselves did not command
 - a. Some sought to enforce circumcision and the Law upon Gentile believers - **Ac 15:1,6**
 - b. But the apostles, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, were able to defuse the problem by simply stating they “gave no such commandment” - **Ac 15:22-29**
4. This is not to say the O.T. is not of value to Christians...
 - a. It was written for our learning, to provide patience, comfort, and hope - **Ro 15:4**
 - b. It was written for our admonition, that we not make similar mistakes - **1 Co 10:6,11**
 - c. We just can't use it to enjoin religious practices upon others which the apostles' themselves did not teach!

CONCLUSION

1. Do we want to avoid being led astray...?
 - a. By “blind leaders of the blind”? - cf. **Mt 15:14**
 - b. By “false teachers...who will secretly bring in destructive heresies”? - cf. **2 Pe 2:1**
2. Then we need to know how to ascertain whether a religious doctrine or practice...
 - a. Is from God or from men
 - b. Is based upon what the apostles of Christ taught, or some other “authority”
3. The solution is simple, but requires effort on our part...
 - a. We must “continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” - **Ac 2:42**
 - a. We must “search the Scriptures daily” - **Ac 17:11**

Only then can we be sure that what we believe or someone teaches is truly from God, and not from man!

Our Duty To God And Country

Matthew 22:15-22

INTRODUCTION

1. Teaching in the temple, Jesus was approached by the Pharisees and the Herodians...
 - a. They came with the intention of entangling Him in His teaching - **Mt 22:15-16**
 - b. They questioned Him whether one should pay taxes to Caesar - **Mt 22:17**

2. Ever the Master Teacher, Jesus easily dealt with their question...
 - a. Seeing through their hypocrisy, He called for a coin - **Mt 22:18-19**
 - b. He asked whose inscription was on it, and they answered "Caesar's" - **Mt 22:20-21**
 - c. His reply cause them to marvel, and to go away - **Mt 22:21-22**

3. The reply of Jesus:
 - a. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's"
 - b. "And to God the things that are God's"
 ...not only silenced His critics, but provided important teaching for His disciples

4. His reply reveals that we have responsibilities to both God and country
 - a. There are things that we must render to Caesar (country)
 - b. There are things that we must render to God

[What is our duty to God and country? In this study we shall review what the Scriptures tell us about our responsibilities as citizens and as disciples. We start with...]

I. OUR DUTY TO COUNTRY

A. PAY TAXES...

1. This was the point of Jesus in our text - **Mt 22:17-21**
2. Paul also taught us to pay taxes - **Ro 13:6-7a**

B. OBEY LAWS...

1. We are to submit to the ordinances (laws) of the land - **Ro 13:1-5; Ti 3:1**
2. This we do for the Lord's sake, that we might silence foolish men - **1 Pe 2:13-16**

C. FEAR AND HONOR...

1. We are to respect and honor those in positions of authority - **Ro 13:7b**
 - a. We are to fear the king - cf. **Pro 24:21**
 - b. We are not to speak evil of our rulers - cf. **Exo 22:28; Ac 23:5; Ti 3:2; 2 Pe 2:10; Ju 8-9**
2. Even as we are to honor all and love the brethren - **1 Pe 2:17**
 - Do you notice that Paul or Peter never had unkind words about Nero?

D. DO GOOD...

1. We are to be ready for every good work - **Ti 3:1**
2. We are to have conduct that is honorable before all - **1 Pe 2:11-12,15-16**

E. PRAY...

1. To make supplications, offer prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks - **1 Ti 2:1**
2. To pray for kings and all who are in authority - **1 Ti 2:1-3**

[Christians are but sojourners and pilgrims in this world (**1 Pe 2:11**). While our true citizenship is in heaven (**Ph 3:20**), we are to be a blessing to those earthly countries in which we sojourn. Fulfill our God-given obligations, and we will be an asset to any country in which we live! Now let's review...]

II. OUR DUTY TO GOD

A. LOVE GOD WITH ALL OUR BEING...

1. Jesus considered this the greatest commandment of the Law - **Mt 22:34-38**
2. Being the greatest command, I would suggest this is our greatest duty!

B. OBEY GOD FROM THE HEART...

1. If we love God, we will keep His commandments - **1 Jn 5:3**
2. Even as Jesus taught that keeping His commandments is evidence of true love - **Jn 14:15, 21,23**

C. MAKE GOD OUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY...

1. His will, His rule, His righteousness, should be our first priority - **Mt 6:33**
2. Not only over our personal concerns, but even over our duty to country
 - a. Whenever there is a conflict between duty to God and duty to country, God must come first
 - b. As stated by Peter: "We ought to obey God rather than men" - **Ac 5:27-29**
3. This helps to answer questions that often arise regarding the Christian's duty to government
 - a. Can a Christian vote?
 - b. Can one serve in political office?
4. If such duties and privileges come at too high a price (i.e., placing country before God), then a Christian must obey God rather than men
 - a. In some countries, the price may be too high, and a Christian could not serve in political office or exercise certain rights as a citizen
 - b. Other countries may allow for God to take precedence in one's conduct, permitting the Christian to participate such things

CONCLUSION

1. Christians ought to be a blessing for any country in which they reside...
 - a. A source of revenue, with respect for laws, and reverence for those in authority
 - b. Contributing to the general welfare, through good deeds and fervent prayers
2. Christians can be such a blessing when...
 - a. They render first to God what is His due, and then what is due the country
 - b. The country respects the priority that must be given God by its citizens

While those in authority might not always understand their proper place, and expect more of their citizens than what is right, may we who are disciples of Christ never fail to:

“Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

Two Great Commandments

Matthew 22:34-40

INTRODUCTION

1. In the temple during His final week prior to His crucifixion, Jesus was questioned by various religious groups...
 - a. The Pharisees and Herodians sought to entangle Him with a question about paying taxes - **Mt 22:15-22**
 - b. The Sadducees tried to trip Him on the subject of the resurrection - **Mt 22:23-33**
 - His answers caused people to marvel and be astonished - **Mt 22:22,33**
2. The Pharisees tried once again, this time sending one of their lawyers...
 - a. Testing Him as to which is the great commandment in the law - **Mt 22:34-36**
 - b. Jesus replied by offering two great commandments
 - 1) The first pertained to loving God - **Mt 22:37-38**
 - 2) The second pertained to loving one's neighbor - **Mt 22:39**
 - Upon these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets - **Mt 22:40**
3. While we no longer live under the Old Law, these "**Two Great Commandments**" are still very important to the Christian...
 - a. For they certainly have their counterpart in the New Covenant
 - b. And keeping the commandments of God is just as important now as it was under the Old Covenant - cf. **1 Co 7:19; 1 Jn 5:3**

[It is proper to ask, therefore, do we love God and our neighbor as we should? Do we understand what is involved in loving God and our fellow man? Perhaps by reflecting upon these "**Two Great Commandments**" we can find the answer to such questions...]

I. THE COMMAND TO LOVE GOD

A. UNDER THE OLD COVENANT...

1. The Israelites were expected to love God (**Deu 6:5**)...
 - a. "with all your heart"
 - b. "with all your soul"
 - c. "with all your strength"
 - d. "with all your mind" - cf. **Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27** (the Septuagint has "mind, soul, strength" in **Deu 6:5**)
 - Emotionally, physically, intellectually, they were to love God
2. Thus they were to love God with their whole being, **not** like some who...
 - a. Serve God emotionally, while committing intellectual suicide
 - b. Serve God intellectually, but with no emotion
 - c. Serve God emotionally and intellectually, but with no actual obedience requiring the exercise of strength (i.e., action)
 - Note how the Law stated their responsibility in **Deu 10:12-13**

B. HOW WE ARE TO LOVE GOD TODAY...

1. Does God expect any less of us? Of course not! We are to love God:
 - a. With all our heart - cf. **1 Co 16:22** (note the use the word “phileo”)
 - b. With all our soul (body and mind) - cf. **Ro 12:1-2**
 - c. With all our strength - cf. **He 10:36**
 - d. With all our mind - cf. **Co 3:1; Ph 4:8**
2. We demonstrate our love for God through keeping His commandments
 - a. This is the love of God - **1 Jn 5:3**
 - b. This is evidence that we love Jesus - **Jn 14:15**

C. THE BLESSING OF KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS...

1. We enjoy a special relationship with God and Jesus - **Jn 14:21-23**
2. We will abide in the love of God - **Jn 15:10; 1 Jn 2:5**
3. Our prayers will be answered - **1 Jn 3:22**

D. HOW TO GROW IN OUR LOVE FOR GOD...

1. By allowing God’s love for us to move us - cf. **1 Jn 4:9-10; Ro 5:8**
 - a. God loved us, even while we were still sinners
 - b. When we reflect upon His love for us, we will love Him more!
2. By asking God to help us grow in love - cf. **2 Th 3:5**
 - a. Paul prayed that the Lord would direct the Thessalonians into the love of God
 - b. If he could pray such for others, can we not pray the same for ourselves?
3. By praying, and growing in love when He answers - cf. **Psa 116:1-2**
 - a. David loved the Lord because He heard His supplications
 - b. Perhaps if we prayed more, and received answers to our prayers more, we would love God more!
4. By keeping the word of God - cf. **1 Jn 2:5**
 - a. The love of God is perfected in those who keep God’s word
 - b. Therefore the more we obey Him, the more our love for God will grow!

[Do we love God any less than what was expected of the Israelites? We certainly have compelling reasons to love Him even more (e.g., the gift of His Son)! Now let’s consider...]

II. THE COMMAND TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR

A. ENJOINED UPON CHRISTIANS...

1. We owe it to love our neighbor - **Ro 13:8a**
2. When fully applied, it fulfills what the Law required - **Ro 13:8b-10**
 - a. Five of the Ten Commandments spoke to working no ill toward our fellow man
 - b. If one truly loves his or her neighbor, they will not be guilty of killing, adultery, stealing, lying, or covetousness
 - c. For sins (and many others) do grave harm to our neighbor

B. ENHANCED BY A NEW COMMAND...

1. Jesus taught us to love one another - **Jn 13:34-35**
2. This new command takes our love to a higher level
 - a. No longer do we just love one another as we love ourselves
 - b. We must love one another as Christ loved us!
 - 1) He loved us with no greater love - **Jn 15:13**
 - 2) He became poor, that we might be rich - **2 Co 8:9**

3. Thus no one can use low self-esteem (or low self-love) as an excuse not to love others as they should

C. EXPERIENCED WHEN WE KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS...

1. We demonstrate true love of one another by keeping the commandments of God - **2 Jn 5-6**
2. This is how we know that we really love one another - **1 Jn 5:2**
 - a. Not by just claiming to love one another
 - b. But by setting the proper example, and encouraging each other by the example we set!

D. EDUCATED BY THE EXAMPLE OF GOD...

1. We develop love for one another by being taught of God - cf. **1 Th 4:9-10**
 - a. The Thessalonians had been taught of God to love their brethren
 - b. They did so remarkably, though there was always room for improvement
2. Jesus by His own example demonstrates what true love is - **1 Jn 3:16-18**
 - If we wish to learn how to love one another properly, look to God and Jesus!

CONCLUSION

1. How great were these two commandments...to love God, and to love your neighbor?
 - a. "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." - **Mt 22:40**
 - b. "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." - **Ro 13:9**
 - These two commands summed up what the Old Law required of the Israelites
2. When one truly loves God, and loves his neighbor as himself...
 - a. They are on the road that leads to eternal life! - cf. **Lk 10:25-28**
 - b. They are on the path that leads to the kingdom of God! - cf. **Mk 12:28-34**

If you wish to receive eternal life, and become a citizen of the kingdom, then demonstrate your love for God by obeying His commands (cf. **Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:16**), and live a life of faith in Jesus that is focused on loving God and others!

Learning From Hypocrites

Matthew 23:1-39

INTRODUCTION

1. What is a hypocrite...?
 - a. Some are accused of hypocrisy when their walk does not measure up to their talk
 - b. But that may be an indication of weakness, not hypocrisy per se
 - c. Hypocrite comes from the Greek **hypokrites** (hoop-ok-ree-tace'), meaning "an actor under an assumed character; e.g., stage-player" (**Strong's**)
 - d. A true hypocrite is one who pretends to be something he or she is not, and really has no intention of becoming

2. Jesus addressed hypocrites in His day, in particular some scribes and Pharisees...
 - a. They were among the more religiously conservative of that time
 - b. Yet some of the harshest words Jesus ever spoke were directed toward them
 - c. In just one speech, he called them...
 - 1) Hypocrites (seven times) - **Mt 23:13-15,23,25,27,29**
 - 2) Fools (twice) and blind guides (five times) - **Mt 23:16-17,19,24,26**
 - 3) Serpents, brood of vipers (once) - **Mt 23:33**

3. Despite such strong condemnation, one can learn from hypocrites...
 - a. You can heed their teaching, when it comes from God's word - cf. **Mt 23:1-3**
 - 1) Don't automatically disregard the message if the messenger is a hypocrite
 - 2) Look beyond the messenger to the original source of the message
 - b. You can also learn how not to act...
 - 1) Especially when you take note of how Jesus rebuked them
 - 2) Which we shall do in this lesson

[What valuable lessons can we learn from hypocrites? The first are lessons gleaned ...]

I. FROM THEIR ABUSE OF AUTHORITY

A. BINDING ON OTHERS WHAT ONE IS UNWILLING TO DO...

1. When speaking from Moses' seat in the synagogues, they were speaking with authority
 2. Unfortunately, they were binding things on others they themselves were unwilling to observe - **Mt 23:1-4**
 3. This breeds disrespect for all authority, including the Word of God
- **If we desire the highest regard for God's word, then practice what we preach!**

B. DOING WORKS TO BE SEEN OF MEN...

1. When they did their works, they did them to be seen by others - **Mt 23:5a**
 2. They loved to wear religious clothing that gave appearance of devotion - **Mt 23:5b**
 3. With time, such hypocrisy will become evident to those who know us
- **If we desire God's approval, we need to do things to glorify God, and at times seen only by Him - Mt 5:16; 6:1-18**

C. SEEKING ATTENTION AND SPECIAL TREATMENT...

1. The Pharisees loved special treatment received from others
 2. Such as the best seats and honorary titles - **Mt 23:6-7**
 3. Jesus expected His disciples to be different - **Mt 23:8-12**
 - a. He forbade the use of religious titles
 - b. He enjoined humility as the road to greatness
- **If we desire to honor Christ, we will respect His teaching and not use religious titles or expect special treatment, but serve others with humility**

[As Jesus continues with a diatribe against the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, we glean several lessons...]

II. FROM THEIR FAILURE IN TEACHING

A. FAILING TO SAVE OTHERS...

1. They failed to truly show others the way to the kingdom of heaven, and to go in themselves - **Mt 23:13**
 2. Through their doctrines they had rendered the commandments of God of no effect - cf. **Mt 15:3-6**
 3. Their teaching came from hearts far removed from God - cf. **Mt 15:7-9**
- **We need to make sure our teaching saves both ourselves and others - cf. 1 Ti 4:16**

B. MISUSING RELIGION FOR MONEY AND PRESTIGE...

1. They used religion to take advantage of widows, and impress others - **Mt 23:14**
 2. Paul warned Timothy and Titus about such teachers - **2 Ti 3:4-6; Ti 1:10-11**
 3. Instead, we should view godliness with contentment as true gain - cf. **1 Ti 6:3-8**
- **It is imperative that we do things honorable in the sight of all - cf. 2 Co 8:21**

C. MAKING PEOPLE WORSE THAN OURSELVES...

1. The Pharisees did not make people better, they made them worse! - **Mt 23:15**
 2. Perhaps by their emphasis on the traditions of men, rather than upon the word of God
 - a. The Pharisees themselves may have known the word of God to some degree
 - b. But in neglecting God's word, they starved those who received their teaching!
- **We must be careful not to put ourselves or traditions between God's word and those we teach, but let them know "the whole counsel of God"! - cf. Ac 20:27**

D. MAKING DISTINCTIONS WHERE GOD HAS NOT...

1. The scribes and Pharisees made fine distinctions between the types of oaths one could swear - **Mt 23:16-22**
 2. We can easily do similar things today
 - a. Saying some commands of God are essential to salvation, while others are not
 - b. Teaching our "think so's" and "it seems to me" instead of telling people what the Bible says
- **To safely guard against this, "let us speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent", proclaiming the oracles of God - cf. 1 Pe 4:11**

[As Jesus increases the level of His righteous indignation against the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees of that day, we are able to learn three final lessons...]

III. FROM THEIR INCONSISTENCY OF PRACTICE

A. LEAVING COMMANDS OF GOD UNDONE...

1. They left undone the “weightier” matters of God’s law - **Mt 23:23-24**
 - a. They stressed tithing, but neglected justice, mercy, faith
 - b. Thus they would strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel
 2. We can be guilty of the same thing
 - a. By stressing “lighter” matters, and leave “weightier” matters undone
 - b. Also by stressing “weightier” matters, and leave “lighter” things undone
- **Jesus said we should do both, leaving neither undone, for all God’s commandments are important! - cf. Mt 5:19**

B. FOCUSING ONLY ON THE OUTER MAN...

1. The “blind” scribes and Pharisees focused only on the outside - **Mt 23:25-28**
 - a. Concerned with keeping the traditions of ritual cleansing
 - b. Willing to put up with extortion, self-indulgence, hypocrisy and lawlessness
 2. We can be guilty of having the wrong focus
 - a. Stressing big buildings, large crowds
 - b. Accepting people into the church without challenging them to true repentance
- **If we are to avoid creating a church of hypocrites, then we need to emphasize true repentance, a conversion of the inner man - cf. Ro 12:2**

C. HONORING THE PAST, BUT UNWILLING TO LIVE IT...

1. They honored the ancient men of God, but were more like their ancestors who murdered the prophets - **Mt 23:29-31**
 - a. Indeed, they would do even more harm than their fathers - **Mt 23:32-34**
 - b. Upon that generation would come the judgment for the murder of all God’s prophets (cf. the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.) - **Mt 23:35-39**
2. We honor men like Jesus and Peter, but are we willing to live what they preached?
 - a. Are we willing to obey their commands? - cf. **Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:16; Ac 2:38**
 - b. Or are we like many back then who refused to heed their word?

CONCLUSION

1. What can we learn from hypocrites? A lot! Provided we...
 - a. Take to heart Jesus’ denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees!
 - b. Do not imitate their abuse of authority, failure in teaching, and inconsistency of practice!
2. Speaking of hypocrites, some people avoid church because “there are too many hypocrites there.” There may be hypocrites in the church, but that is no reason not to follow Jesus...
 - a. Did the hypocrisy of Judas Iscariot permit the rest of the apostles to leave Jesus?
 - b. Do you allow the presence of hypocrites keep you from enjoying other activities (such as sports events, vacations, etc.)?

Besides...which is better, to spend a short time with hypocrites in the church, or to spend eternity with hypocrites in hell? Remember what Jesus said of the hypocrites:

“How can you escape the condemnation of hell?” (Mt 23:33b)

Only through the redemption God offers through His Son can any of us escape the condemnation of hell. Don't let the hypocrisy of some keep you from the blessings of salvation in Christ Jesus!

The Olivet Discourse - I

Matthew 24:1-28

INTRODUCTION

1. A challenging passage in the Bible is Jesus' discourse on the Mount of Olives...
 - a. Given shortly after He left the temple with His disciples
 - b. Recorded in **Mt 24:1-51; Mk 13:1-37; Lk 21:5-36**
 - c. Commonly referred to as "**The Olivet Discourse**"
 - Our focus will be primarily on Matthew's account - **Mt 24:1-51**

2. It's difficulty is apparent as one considers the diversity of interpretations offered...
 - a. Some maintain that it is entirely about events preceding the Lord's second coming
 - b. Others say that it is entirely about events related to the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in 70 A.D.
 - c. Yet many believe it contains reference to both of these events

3. Even those who say it refers to both events differ as to when a particular event is being described in Matthew's account...
 - a. Some say that **vs. 4-28** refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, and **vs. 29** begins the discussion about the Lord's second coming (cf. **J. W. McGarvey**, The Fourfold Gospel)
 - b. Others contend that **vs. 35** begins talking about the second coming
 - c. Others say Jesus **switches back and forth** throughout the discourse

4. I have trouble with **Mt 24** describing both events in the light of **Lk 17**...
 - a. Where Jesus is talking about "one of the days of the Son of Man" - **Lk 17:22-37**
 - 1) Note: He alludes to the fact there is more than one "day of the Son of Man"
 - 2) I.e., the Lord will come in judgment in ways prior to His final coming at the Last Day
 - b. In the discourse of **Lk 17**, Jesus uses language similar to **Mt 24**, but in ways that do not allow for a simple division of **Mt 24**, either at **verse 29 or 35**; notice...
 - 1) **Lk 17:26-29** is parallel to **Mt 24:37-39** (found **after** verses 29,35)
 - 2) Yet **Lk 17:31** is parallel to **Mt 24:17-18** (found **before** verses 29,35)
 - 3) And then **Lk 17:34-36** is parallel to **Mt 24:40-41** (found **after** verses 29,35)
 - **If Jesus is describing just one event in Lk 17 (which I believe He is), then He is likely describing just one event in Mt 24**

[At this time, I view "**The Olivet Discourse**" in **Mt 24** as depicting the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in 70 A.D., though it foreshadows His second coming. To see why, let's start with...]

I. THE SETTING OF THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

A. THE WORDS OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE...

1. His parables depicting Israel's rejection of Him, and its consequence
 - a. The parable of the two sons - **Mt 21:28-32** (cf. v.31-32)
 - b. The parable of the wicked vine dressers - **Mt 21:33-46** (cf. v.42-45)
 - c. The parable of the wedding feast - **Mt 22:1-14** (cf. v.7-9)
2. His condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees

- a. Who would fill up the measure of their fathers' guilt - **Mt 23:29-32**
- b. Who kill, crucify, scourge, and persecute the prophets, wise men, and scribes He would send to them - **Mt 23:33-34**
- c. Upon whom the blood of all the righteous would come, upon that very generation - **Mt 23:35-36**
- 3. His lamentation over Jerusalem
 - a. The city who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her - **Mt 23:37a**
 - b. The city unwilling to accept the love shown to her - **Mt 23:37b**
 - c. Whose house would be left desolate - **Mt 23:38-39**

B. THE PROPHECY OF JESUS ABOUT THE TEMPLE...

- 1. After his disciples were showing Him the buildings of temple - **Mt 24:1**
- 2. Declaring that not one stone would be left upon another - **Mt 24:2**

C. THE QUESTIONS OF THE DISCIPLES...

- 1. In Mark's gospel, two questions are asked - **Mk 13:4**
 - a. "When will these things be?"
 - b. "What will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"
- 2. In Luke's gospel, the two questions are similar - **Lk 21:7**
 - a. "When will these things be?"
 - b. "What sign will there be when these things are about to take place?"
- 3. In Matthew's gospel, the second question is worded differently - **Mt 24:3**
 - a. "When will these things be?"
 - b. "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"
- 4. Observations regarding these questions:
 - a. Matthew wrote his gospel for a Jewish audience
 - 1) He likely recorded the questions as asked by the disciples, who presumed that the destruction of temple would mean His coming and the end of the age
 - 2) Jewish readers of the gospel would likely have the same conception
 - b. Mark and Luke wrote their gospels to Gentiles
 - 1) To avoid possible misunderstanding by non-Jewish readers, they worded the disciples' questions to reflect what the discourse is actually about
 - 2) I.e., the destruction of the temple and the sign when its destruction would be imminent

[When the **setting** leading up to "**The Olivet Discourse**" is carefully considered, the **subject** of Jesus' words become clear. The destruction of the temple is the matter under consideration, not the second coming of Christ. Now let's proceed to examine more closely...]

II. THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

A. WHAT WILL "NOT" BE THE SIGN...

- 1. Be careful that none deceive you, claiming to be the Christ - **Mt 24:4-5**
- 2. Don't be troubled by wars, earthquakes, famines, pestilence - **Mt 24:6-8**
 - a. Such things will come, but the end (destruction of the temple) is not yet
 - b. They are only the beginning of sorrows (not the sign of the end)
- 3. Anticipate persecution and hard times - **Mt 24:9-13**
 - a. You will be killed and hated for His name's sake
 - b. Many will be offended, betray one another, and hate one another

- c. False prophets will deceive many
- d. The love of many will grow cold because of lawlessness
- e. But he who endures to “the end” will be saved -- “the end” refers here:
 - 1) Not to the second coming (implying one must live until Christ comes again)
 - 2) Nor to the destruction of Jerusalem (implying once one has survived that event, one’s salvation is secured)
 - 3) But to the end of one’s life - cf. **Re 2:10**
- 4. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world - **Mt 24:14**
 - a. As a witness to all the nations
 - b. Then the end (the destruction of the temple) will come
 - 1) This would end the Jewish sacrifices, and other remnants of OT worship
 - 2) That which was nailed to the cross, abolished by Jesus’ death, would pass away - cf. **Co 2:14-17; Ep 2:14-16; He 8:13**
 - Was the gospel preached to all nations prior to the destruction of the temple? Note what Paul wrote prior to 70 A.D. - **Ro 10:16-18; Co 1:23**

B. WHAT WILL BE THE SIGN...

- 1. The “abomination of desolation” - **Mt 24:15; Mk 13:14**
 - a. Standing in the holy place (the holy city Jerusalem)
 - b. As foretold by Daniel - cf. **Dan 9:26-27**
- 2. When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies - **Lk 21:20**
 - a. Luke therefore explains the “abomination of desolation”
 - b. In 70 A.D., Roman armies surrounded and besieged Jerusalem prior to destroying it and the temple
 - Thus Jesus answers the disciples’ question: “What sign will there be when these things are about to take place?”

C. WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU SEE THE SIGN...

- 1. Those in Judea are to flee to the mountains - **Mt 24:16-22**
 - a. Don’t delay by going to your homes and getting your clothes
 - b. It will be a difficult time for pregnant and nursing mothers
 - c. Pray that your flight be not in winter (when travel is difficult) or on the Sabbath (when city gates are closed to travel)
 - d. For there will be “great tribulation”, though shortened for the elect’s sake
 - 1) Luke specifies the nature of this tribulation - **Lk 21:23b-24**
 - 2) A Jewish general taking captive by the Romans just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 offered this summary:
 - a) All the calamities which had befallen any nation from the beginning of the world were but small in comparison with those of the Jews
 - b) In the siege of Jerusalem, no fewer than 1,100,000 perished (it was during the time of the Passover, when more than 3,000,000 Jews were assembled)
 - c) In surrounding provinces 250,000 were slain
 - d) 97,000 were taken captive, some killed by beasts in Roman theaters, some sent to work in Egypt, others sold as slaves
 - **Flavius Josephus**, Jewish Wars (from **Barnes Commentary on Matthew**)
 - 3) The “elect” were Christians, spared by a shortened siege
 - a) The Jews in the city engaged the Romans in battle
 - b) Titus, the Roman general, being called to return to Rome, proceeded to end the siege and stormed the city (**Barnes Commentary**)

2. Don't be misled by false christes and false prophets - Mt 24:23-28
 - a. Even those who show great signs and wonders to deceive
 - b. For the coming (judgment) of the Son of Man will be like lightning across the sky
 - 1) Do not expect to find Him in the desert or in inner rooms
 - 2) When He comes in judgment, it will be swift - cf. **Lk 17:22-24**
 - c. Where the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered
 - 1) Alluding to Jerusalem surrounded by armies
 - 2) This is the "sign" to warn them it is time to flee Jerusalem and Judea!

CONCLUSION (Part One)

1. So far, all this depicts a **local, escapable** judgment...
 - a. Where Jesus warned those in Judea of what is to come
 - b. Where they are given a sign to let them know when to flee

-- **Indeed, many believe that up to verse 29 (or 35), Jesus is foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem (and its temple) that did occur in 70 A. D.**
2. It certainly does not fit a **worldwide, inescapable** judgment...
 - a. As will characterize the second coming of Christ
 - b. As Paul and Peter taught Christians throughout the Mediterranean world - cf. **1 Th 5:2-3; 2 Th 1:7-10; 2 Pe 3:10-12**
3. Our next study will continue "**The Olivet Discourse**", starting with **verse 29**...
 - a. Which certainly sounds like the second coming of Christ
 - b. But is it? Or was Jesus still describing events pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem?

Eusebius (ca. 300 A.D.) in his "Ecclesiastical History" wrote that Christians heeded the warnings of Jesus in Matthew 24, and fled Jerusalem when it was surrounded by the Roman army.

May we likewise heed the words of Jesus and not be misled by false prophets and false christes, not be troubled by wars, famines, pestilence, earthquakes, or even persecution, enduring to the end by remaining faithful to Him, looking forward to His final coming at the Last Day!

The Olivet Discourse - II

Matthew 24:29-51

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous lesson, we covered the first half of Matthew 24...
 - a. Commonly called “**The Olivet Discourse**”, since Jesus was on the Mount of Olives when He delivered it
 - b. A challenging passage of scripture, believed to discussing...
 - 1) The destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in 70 A.D.
 - 2) The second coming of Christ, which is yet to occur
 - 3) Or both events, described either in turn or intertwined

2. I’ve proposed the entire chapter foretells the destruction of Jerusalem, based first upon the **setting** leading up to the discourse, which includes...
 - a. Jesus’ words spoken in the temple
 - 1) His parables about Israel’s rejection of Him - **Mt 21:28-32,33-46; 22:1-14**
 - 2) His condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees - **Mt 23:27-36**
 - 3) His lamentation over Jerusalem - **Mt 23:37-39**
 - b. Jesus’ prophecy spoken about the temple - **Mt 24:1-2**
 - c. The disciples’ questions, which when Mark and Luke’s account is considered, appear to be:
 - 1) “When will these things be?”
 - 2) “What will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”
 -- Cf. **Mt 24:3; Mk 13:4; Lk 21:7**

3. We saw that in **vs. 4-29**, Jesus describes...
 - a. What **will not be** the sign (other than the gospel preached to all nations) - **Mt 24:4-14**
 - b. What **will be** the sign - **Mt 24:15**
 - 1) The abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel - **Dan 9:26-27**
 - 2) Which Luke explains to be Jerusalem surrounded by armies - **Lk 21:20**
 - c. What to do when they saw the sign - **Mt 24:16-28**
 - 1) Those in Judea were to flee to the mountains to avoid a great tribulation
 - 2) They were not to be misled by false christs or false prophets

[Up to **vs. 29**, Jesus described a **local, escapable** judgment to befall Jerusalem. He does not describe the **worldwide, inescapable** judgment taught elsewhere in the Scriptures. But with **vs. 29**, some believe Jesus now addresses His second coming (cf. J. W. McGarvey’s Fourfold Gospel). As we continue with our study, I propose that the destruction of Jerusalem is still under consideration...]

II. THE OLIVET DISCOURSE (continued)

D. WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT...

1. Events to occur “immediately after the tribulation of those days”...
 - a. Cosmic disturbances - **Mt 24:29**
 - 1) The sun will be darkened
 - 2) The moon will not give its light
 - 3) The stars will fall from heaven

- 4) The heavens will be shaken
 - b. The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven - **Mt 24:30**
 - 1) All the tribes of the earth will mourn
 - 2) They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory
 - c. The elect will be gathered - **Mt 24:31**
 - 1) For with a great sound of the trumpet, angels will be sent
 - 2) They shall gather the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to another
2. they may not be referring to Jesus' coming at the Last Day...
- a. The events were to occur "immediately after the tribulation of those days" ("in those days, after that tribulation") - **Mt 24:29; Mk 13:24**
 - 1) They are connected in time to the tribulation described in **Mt 24:15-28**
 - 2) This "coming" of Jesus was to occur at the conclusion of the siege of Jerusalem
 - b. The events are similar to those used to foretell God's judgment of other nations
 - 1) Babylon - **Isa 13:1,6-13**
 - 2) Egypt - **Isa 19:1-2; cf. Eze 32:2,7-9**
 - 2) Tyre - **Isa 23:1; 24:21-23;**
 - 3) Edom - **Isa 34:4-6**
 - 4) Nineveh - **Nah 1:1-5**
 - 5) Israel - **Amo 8:9**
 - 6) Judah - **Jer 4:5-6,23-28**
3. For such reasons, I suggest that even in **Mt 24:29-31**...
 - a. Jesus refers to the destruction of Jerusalem
 - b. Like other Jewish prophets, Jesus uses figurative language to depict:
 - 1) The judgment to befall the wicked (in terms of worldwide destruction)
 - 2) The provision made for the righteous (in terms of the gathering by angels)
 - c. Jewish prophets foretold God's judgment upon such nations...
 - 1) Using figures of worldwide destruction, even though the judgment was local
 - 2) Perhaps because such judgments foreshadow God's Final Judgment to come upon the entire world at the Last Day

[The rest of the chapter includes...]

E. ADMONITIONS TO BE PREPARED AND PRODUCTIVE...

1. The parable of the fig tree - **Mt 24:32-33**
 - a. New branches and leaves indicate summer is near
 - b. When you see these things (Jerusalem surrounded by armies), the time is near
2. It would happen before "this generation" passed away - **Mt 24:34**
 - a. Some define "generation" as a race of people (i.e., the Jews) - cf. **McGarvey, B. W. Johnson**
 - b. But note its use by Jesus just prior to this discourse - **Mt 23:33-36** (esp. **36**)
 - The destruction of Jerusalem came to pass within forty years!
3. The words of Jesus will come to pass - **Mt 24:35**
 - a. Heaven and earth shall pass away one day - cf. **2 Pe 3:7,10**
 - b. But Jesus' words will by no means pass away
 - With v. **35**, some believe Jesus now talks about the second coming; but Jesus is using an illustration to demonstrate the surety of His words - e.g., **Mt 5:18**
4. Of that day and hour, only the Father knows - **Mt 24:36**
 - a. They might discern the general timing with the advance of armies toward Jerusalem

- b. But the day and hour when the siege would begin, only the Father knew
 - So don't delay when the "sign" appears (Jerusalem surrounded by armies)
- 5. It will be like the days of Noah - **Mt 24:37-39**
 - a. In the days before the flood...
 - 1) Noah knew what was coming and was preparing, but people continued with their normal activities
 - 2) Only when it was too late did the people know
 - b. Prior to the siege of Jerusalem...
 - 1) Many people probably thought the conflict would end peacefully, and so lived their lives accordingly
 - 2) But once the siege began, it was too late
- 6. Some will be taken away - **Mt 24:40-41**
 - a. When the city was stormed, 97,000 Jews were taken captive
 - b. Some to be killed by beasts in Roman theaters, some sent to work in Egypt, others sold as slaves - **Flavius Josephus**, Jewish Wars (as per **Barnes Commentary** on Matthew)
- 7. Therefore, watch! - **Mt 24:42-44**
 - a. You don't know the hour of the Son of Man's coming
 - b. Don't be caught off guard, like the master of a house who did not know when a thief would break in
 - c. Be ready, for the Son of Man will come when you not expect Him
 - The siege of Jerusalem might begin promptly, so flee Judea promptly when you see the armies surrounding Jerusalem!
- 8. The parable of the faithful servant and the wicked servant - **Mt 24:45-51**
 - a. The faithful servant is blessed if doing the master's will when he comes
 - b. So the disciples of Jesus are admonished to be productive

CONCLUSION

1. Admittedly, there is much in "**The Olivet Discourse**" that alludes to our Lord's second coming at the Last Day...
 - a. But that is no different than the prophecies by other Jewish prophets who foretold God's judgment upon other nations and cities
 - b. It was a common motif used by Jewish prophets, we should not be surprised to see Jesus using the same
 - **And rightly so, for God's judgments upon nations in the past are types and shadows of the Final Judgment to befall the entire world when Jesus comes again**
2. In addition to the setting leading up to the discourse, there is the natural flow of the discourse itself that leads me to conclude it is entirely about the destruction of Jerusalem...
 - a. Jesus' disciples are told what will not be the sign - **Mt 24:1-14**
 - b. They are told will be the sign that His coming is near - **Mt 24:15**
 - c. They are told what to do when they see the sign - **Mt 24:16-28**
 - d. His coming in judgment (the fall of Jerusalem) is described in terms reminiscent of other Jewish prophets who foretold of God's judgments upon various nations - **Mt 24:29-31**
 - e. Admonitions are given for them to be prepared and productive in the meantime - **Mt 24:32-51**

So I view "**The Olivet Discourse**" to describe a **local, escapable** judgment which occurred as Jesus foretold in 70 A. D.

However, there is still the **worldwide, inescapable** judgment at the Last Day - cf. **1 Th 5:2-3; 2 Th 1:7-10; 2 Pe 3:10-12**

Are you ready for that Day? The admonitions to be prepared and productive are very similar:

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”

“Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?”

“Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;”

- 2 Peter 3:10-14

The Judgment Of The Nations

Matthew 25:31-46

INTRODUCTION

1. Included in **“The Olivet Discourse”** are two parables, followed by a judgment scene...
 - a. The parables are directed toward Jesus’ disciples
 - 1) The first to encourage them to be watchful - **Mt 25:1-13**
 - 2) The second to admonish them to be productive - **Mt 25:14-30**
 - b. The judgment scene depicts the nations brought before Jesus - **Mt 25:31-46**
 - 1) Note that it is the “nations” being judged, not disciples
 - 2) The nations are judged based upon their treatment of Jesus’ disciples
 - a) Those that showed mercy and kindness to His disciples are blessed
 - b) Those that did not are condemned

2. Questions abound regarding **“The Judgment Of The Nations”**...
 - a. Who are the “nations” in this passage? All of mankind, or only the non-elect?
 - b. Is this “judgment” scene depicting the Day of Judgment, or might it refer to a judgment that foreshadowed the Final Judgment?
 - c. As part of **“The Olivet Discourse”**, could Jesus still be talking about events related to the destruction of Jerusalem?

[However one may answer such questions, there are important lessons to be gleaned from these words of Jesus. But let’s first consider how it may be that Jesus is still referring to events related to the destruction of Jerusalem described in **Mt 24...**]

I. THE JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS THEME

A. AS FOUND IN THE BOOK OF JOEL...

1. The coming day of the Lord is depicted
 - a. Following the outpouring of God’s Spirit - **Joel 2:28-29**
 - b. A great and terrible day is coming - **Joel 2:30-31**
 - c. Yet salvation is available to those who accept it - **Joel 2:32**; cf. **Ac 2:16-21**
2. A “judgment of the nations” is then described
 - a. The nations gathered in the Valley of Jehoshaphat - **Joel 3:1-2a,12-16**
 - b. The nations judged on the basis of their treatment of God’s people - **Joel 3:2b-8**

B. AS FOUND IN THE OLIVET DISCOURSE...

1. Jesus foretold the coming day of the Lord - **Mt 24:1-51**
 - a. Coming in destruction upon Jerusalem
 - b. With warnings to escape when they see Jerusalem surrounded by armies
2. A judgment of the nations is then described - **Mt 25:31-46**
 - a. The nations gathered before Son of Man
 - b. The nations judged on the basis of their treatment of God’s people (“inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren”)

C. THIS IS A COMMON THEME IN THE SCRIPTURES...

1. God describes judgment to come, using other nations as instruments of His wrath
2. But He also holds the nations accountable for how His people are treated
 - a. E.g., Assyria, the rod of God's anger - **Isa 10:5-7,12-14,24-26**
 - b. E.g., Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon - **Amos 1:3,6,9,11,13**
3. Nations that went too far (e.g., abusing the innocent) were held accountable

D. JESUS MAY BE USING THE SAME THEME...

1. Describing a judgment upon the nations...
 - a. Employing figures reminiscent of the Judgment at the Last Day
 - 1) E.g., the Son of Man coming in glory, sitting on His throne
 - 2) E.g., the nations divided like sheep and goats
 - 3) E.g., judgment rendered, followed by reward or punishment
 - b. For such judgments foreshadowed and typified the Final Judgment
2. Describing a judgment of the nations...
 - a. Which followed the Lord's judgment upon Jerusalem - cf. **Mt 24**
 - b. Regarding their treatment of His brethren (the disciples of Jesus)
 - c. Nations who treated them kindly would be blessed, otherwise they would be condemned

[This may be what Jesus is doing at this point in “**The Olivet Discourse**”. It would certainly serve to comfort His disciples, knowing that nations which failed to show mercy to them would not go unpunished. Even if this is point of the text, we can still glean important...]

II. LESSONS FROM THE JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS

A. THERE WILL BE A DAY OF JUDGMENT...

1. Just as the Lord has judged nations throughout history
 2. So He will judge the world at the end of time, at the Last Day
 - a. Jesus often spoke of the Judgment - e.g., **Mt 12:36-37,41-42; Jn 12:47-48**
 - b. Paul also - e.g., **Ac 17:30-31; 24:25; Ro 2:3-6; 14:10; 2 Co 5:10; 2 Ti 4:1**
 - c. Others as well - e.g., **He 9:27; 1 Pe 4:5; 2 Pe 2:9; 3:7; 1 Jn 4:17; Ju 6**
- Are we preparing for the Day of Judgment?

B. ONE ISSUE WILL BE HOW WE TREATED JESUS' BRETHREN...

1. Of course, every deed, word, and thought will be judged (see above verses)
2. But our text reminds us how Jesus takes the treatment of His brethren - **Mt 25:40,45**
 - a. “as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me”
 - b. “as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me”
3. Jesus made the same point to Saul on the road to Damascus - **Ac 9:1-5**
 - a. “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”
 - b. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”

-- By persecuting the church, Saul was guilty of persecuting Christ!
4. Jesus is the head, and His disciples (the church) is His body - **Ep 1:22-23**
 - a. What we do or not do for His disciples, we do or not do for Christ!
 - b. How is our treatment of our brethren? Are we guilty of:
 - 1) Abusing them?
 - 2) Ignoring them?
 - 3) Failing to love them?

-- What is our relationship with other Christians, especially in the context of the local church?

C. THERE ARE PLACES PREPARED FOR AFTER THE JUDGMENT...

1. One is for prepared people - **Mt 25:34**
 - a. Described as “the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” - cf. **2 Ti 4:18; 2 Pe 1:11**
 - b. Described as “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” - cf. **2 Pe 3:13; Re 21:1**
 - c. Described as “the holy city, New Jerusalem” - cf. **He 13:14; Re 3:12; 21:2-7**
-- This place is for those whose names are in the Lamb’s book of Life - **Re 20:11-15**
2. One is for unprepared people - **Mt 25:41**
 - a. Described as “the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” - cf. **Re 20:10**
 - b. Described as “the like of fire and brimstone” - **Re 20:10,14; 21:8**
 - c. Described as “the second death” - **Re 20:14; 21:8**
-- This place is for those whose names are not in the book of life - **Re 20:15**
3. Both places are prepared to last for eternity - **Mt 25:46**
 - a. The one offering everlasting punishment
 - b. The other offering eternal life

CONCLUSION

1. God’s judgment upon nations in the past were written for our admonition - **1 Co 10:11**
 - a. Such judgments reveal that God is a Righteous Judge
 - b. Such judgments portend the Judgment to come at the Last Day
2. Whether or not Jesus uses the setting of the Final Judgment to describe judgment upon the nations following the destruction of Jerusalem, His words should cause us to consider...
 - a. Are we preparing for the Day of Judgment?
 - b. Involved in that preparation, is our relationship with our brethren what it ought to be?
 - c. What will Jesus say to us on that Day?

May we all walk in the grace and mercy of the Lord with an obedient faith and love, so that we may hear Him say:

“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of world.” - Mt 25:34

The Lord's Supper

Matthew 26:26-30

INTRODUCTION

1. During His last week, Jesus observed the Passover for the last time...
 - a. The Passover was a Jewish feast, observed annually - cf. **Deu 16:1-8**
 - b. Commemorating Israel's deliverance from Egypt - **Exo 12:1-28,43-49**
2. This last Passover was of special significance to Jesus - cf. **Lk 22:14-15**
 - a. He knew His death was imminent ("before I suffer")
 - b. He was with those he loved - cf. **Jn 13:1** ("He loved them to the end")
3. On this occasion Jesus instituted what we call the Lord's Supper...
 - a. Read our text - **Mt 26:26-30**
 - b. As recorded by Luke, Jesus wanted His disciples to do this in memory of Him - **Lk 22:19**
4. The importance of properly observing the Lord's Supper should not be underestimated...
 - a. The church at Corinth was guilty of abusing it - cf. **1 Co 11:20-22**
 - b. Such misuse has serious consequences - cf. **1 Co 11:27,29**

[That we might observe the Supper properly, to receive its blessings rather than condemnation, let's use this opportunity to review what is revealed about the purpose and observance of "**The Lord's Supper**"...]

I. THE MEANING OF THE SUPPER

A. IT IS A MEMORIAL...

1. Note Paul's account as given by the Lord Himself - **1 Co 11:23-25**
 - a. We eat the bread in memory of His body
 - b. We drink the cup (fruit of the vine) in memory of His blood
 2. We therefore commemorate the death of Jesus on the cross - **Mt 26:28**
 - a. Whose death made the new covenant possible - **He 9:16**
 - b. Whose blood was shed for the remission of sins - **Ep 1:7**
- **As the Passover was a memorial commemorating Israel's deliverance from Egypt through the blood of the lambs on the door post, so the Supper is a memorial of our Lord's death who makes our deliverance from the bondage of sin possible**

B. IT IS A PROCLAMATION...

1. We proclaim our faith in the efficacy of the Lord's death - **1 Co 11:26a**
 - a. That His death was indeed for our sins
 - b. If we didn't believe it, why keep the Supper?
 2. We also proclaim our faith in the Lord's return - **1 Co 11:26b**
 - a. For it is to be done "till He comes"
 - b. If we don't believe He is coming, then why keep the Supper?
- **Thus the Lord's Supper looks forward as well as backward, and will ever be observed by His disciples who trust in His redemption and anticipate His return!**

C. IT IS A COMMUNION...

1. A fellowship or sharing in the blood of Christ - **1 Co 10:16a**
 - a. As we partake, we commune with the blood of Christ
 - b. Perhaps in the sense of reinforcing blessings we enjoy through the blood of Christ - cf. **1 Jn 1:7,9**
2. A fellowship or sharing in the body of Christ - **1 Co 10:16b-17**
 - a. As we partake, we commune with the body of Christ
 - b. Perhaps in the sense of reinforcing fellowship together in the body of Christ (i.e., the church), as we break bread together

[“**The Lord’s Supper**”, which is also called “Communion” and “Breaking of Bread” (cf. **1 Co 10:16; Ac 2:42; 20:7**) certainly has great significance and should not be taken lightly. We should therefore consider what the Scriptures reveal about...]

II. THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SUPPER**A. TO BE DONE WITH REVERENCE...**

1. That is, “in a worthy manner” (NKJV) - **1 Co 11:27,29**
 - a. The KJV says “worthily”, which some have misunderstood
 - b. It is an adverb, describing how we take it, not whether we are worthy (none are truly worthy)
 2. With respect for the supreme price Jesus paid for our sins
 - a. E.g., the cruel torture and humiliation of His physical body
 - b. E.g., the spiritual anguish suffered as the Son of God bore the punishment for our sins (“My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?”)
 3. Failure to observe with proper reverence brings condemnation - **1 Co 11:27,29**
 - a. One will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord
 - b. One will eat and drink judgment to himself
- **To make light of this memorial puts one in the same category as those who mocked Him as He hung on the cross!**

B. TO BE DONE WITH SELF-EXAMINATION...

1. Such as reflecting upon one’s spiritual condition - **1 Co 11:28**
 2. Are we living in a manner that shows appreciation for His sacrifice?
 - a. By accepting the grace of God in our lives? - cf. **2 Co 5:18-6:1**
 - b. By living for Jesus who died for us? - cf. **2 Co 5:14-15; Ga 2:20**
 3. Or are we by willful sinning, guilty of having:
 - a. “trampled the Son of God underfoot”?
 - b. “counted the blood by which [we were] sanctified a common thing”?
 - c. “insulted the Spirit of grace”? - cf. **He 10:26-29**
 4. Do we, by refusing to repent of our sins, “crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an shame”? - cf. **He 6:4-6**
- **In one sense, the Supper is a very private matter between a Christian and his or her God; a time to reflect the past and to resolve for the future**

C. TO BE DONE WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS...

1. There is ample indication the Supper is designed to be a communal meal
 - a. The disciples “came together” to break bread - **Ac 20:7**

- b. When they came together, they were to “wait for one another” - **1 Co 11:33**
- c. Partaking together of “one bread”, they demonstrate they are “one bread and one body” - **1 Co 10:16**
- **We commune not just with the Lord, but with one another**
- 2. For this reason I personally question such practices as:
 - a. Observing the Supper by one's self when camping or traveling
 - b. Observing the Supper on Sunday night when just one or a couple of people in the congregation are partaking
 - c. Taking the elements to the sick or shut-in who were unable to assemble
- **While such issues may fall in the realm of opinion, let's not forget that the Supper builds fellowship with one another as well as with the Lord!**

D. TO BE DONE OFTEN...

- 1. The Biblical evidence is that it was done weekly...
 - a. Christians came together on the first day of the week to “break bread” - **Ac 20:7**
 - b. Other indications of a weekly observance:
 - 1) The church at Corinth was coming together to eat the Lord's Supper, though they were abusing it - cf. **1 Co 11:17-22**
 - 2) Instructions concerning the collection suggest their coming together was on the first day of the week - cf. **1 Co 16:1-2**
 - c. Following the divinely approved example of Christians in the Bible, we know God approves of a weekly observance on the first day of the week
- 2. The earliest historical evidence outside the Bible confirms the day and frequency...
 - a. **The Didache** (ca. 95 A.D.) indicates Christians were to come together on the first day of the week to break bread - **Didache 14:1**
 - b. **Justin Martyr** (ca. 150 A.D.) records how Christians assembled on Sunday and partook of the Supper - **Apology I, 67**
- 3. Some believe that a weekly observance diminishes the importance of the Supper
 - a. Which is why some do it monthly, quarterly, or annually
 - b. But does the frequent practice of:
 - 1) Assembling diminishing its value and importance?
 - 2) Singing praises and offering prayers devalue their benefits?
 - 3) Preaching and studying God's Word decrease their significance to our lives?
- **Our spiritual lives are dependent upon the value and benefits of our Lord's death on the cross; a weekly observance of the memorial helps us to live appreciatively and accordingly!**

CONCLUSION

- 1. **“The Lord's Supper”** is a very special memorial of His death for our sins...
 - a. Instituted by Jesus Himself, He asked His disciples to do it in His memory
 - b. Jesus told His disciples that He would not eat of the elements again until:
 - 1) “...that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.” - **Mt 26:29**
 - 2) “...that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” - **Mk 14:25**
 - 3) “...it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” - **Lk 22:16**
 - 4) “...the kingdom of God shall come.” - **Lk 22:18**
 - c. There are two plausible explanations for what Jesus means:
 - 1) Some think it refers to Jesus having fellowship with us as we observe the Lord's Supper in the church, which is His kingdom - cf. **1 Co 10:16-17**

2) Others propose that it refers to the special communion we will have with Jesus in His Father's kingdom, spoken often in terms of a heavenly feast - cf. **Isa 25:6-8; Mt 8:11; 22:2-14; Lk 14:15-24; Re 19:9**

2. The first Christians "continued steadfastly" in its observance...
 - a. Just as they did in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship and prayer - **Ac 2:42**
 - b. Coming together on the first day of the week for that very purpose - **Ac 20:7**
3. Christians today should never lose sight of its significance for us...
 - a. A constant reminder of the great sacrifice Jesus paid for our sins
 - b. A communion or sharing of the body and blood of the Lord
 - c. A time for self-examination and rededication of our service to the Lord
 - d. A means for building fellowship with one another in the body of Christ

May such thoughts encourage us to never neglect opportunities we have to observe the Lord's Supper, but to continue steadfastly and in so doing "proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

The Garden Of Gethsemane

Matthew 26:36-46

INTRODUCTION

1. When the last supper of Jesus with His disciples was finished...
 - a. He predicted the betrayal by Judas - **Mt 26:21-25**
 - b. He observed the Passover, instituting the Lord's Supper - **Mt 26:26-30**
 - b. He then foretold Peter's denial of Him, as they made their way to the Mount of Olives - **Mt 26:31-35**
2. Jesus and His disciples then came to a place called Gethsemane...
 - a. A garden outside the city, across the Kidron brook and on the Mount of Olives
 - b. It's name meaning "olive press", and was possibly a remote walled garden
 - c. A place where Jesus often went with His disciples - **Jn 18:1-2**
3. Note the contrast between the Garden of Eden, and the Garden of Gethsemane...
 - a. In the first garden, the first man fell by yielding to temptation
 - b. In the second garden, the Second Man (cf. **1 Co 15:47**) conquered by yielding to the will of God

[Yes, "**The Garden Of Gethsemane**" was a place of victory for Jesus (and consequently for us as well). But the victory did not come easy, as we notice first of all that...]

I. THE GARDEN WAS A PLACE OF SUFFERING

A. WHERE JESUS EXPERIENCED GREAT DISTRESS...

1. He went to pray, accompanied only by Peter, James, and John - **Mt 26:36-37**
2. Before He began praying, He was "deeply distressed" - **Mt 26:37**
3. Mark records that He was "troubled and deeply distressed" - **Mk 14:33**
4. Later, Luke records that He was "in agony", and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground - **Lk 22:44**
5. He was likely troubled for He knew that His hour had come - cf. **Jn 12:27**
 - a. He knew what was imminent, for He had told His disciples three times - **Mt 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19**
 - b. There was not only physical pain to endure, but also the burden of our sins and separation from His Father as He bore our sins on the cross! - cf. **Isa 53:6; Mt 27:46**

B. WHERE JESUS ENDURED INTENSE SORROW...

1. He described Himself as "exceedingly sorrowful, even to death" - **Mt 26:38**
2. The writer of Hebrews refers to His "vehement cries and tears" - **He 5:7**
3. Again, His grief and sorrow was partly due to the fact that He was taking upon Himself our own griefs and sorrows! - cf. **Isa 53:4-5**

C. WHERE JESUS ENCOUNTERED SOLEMN LONELINESS...

1. He wanted His closest disciples to watch with Him - **Mt 26:37-38**
 - a. Those who had been with Him from the beginning - **Mt 4:18-22**

- b. Those who were privy to one of His greatest miracles - **Mk 5:37-43**
- c. Those who saw Him transfigured on the mountain - **Mt 17:1-2**
- d. Including the disciple “whom He loved” - **Jn 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20,24**
- 2. Yet after each episode of praying, He found them sleeping - **Mt 26:40-41,43,45**
 - a. When He desired fellowship for comfort, there was none to be found
 - b. The Psalmist foretold this would happen - cf. **Psa 69:20**

[Alone in His distress and sorrow, our Lord found “**The Garden Of Gethsemane**” to be a place of great suffering for Him. Then something happened. Before He left to face the mob led by Judas to arrest Him, Jesus found that...]

II. THE GARDEN WAS A PLACE OF STRENGTH

A. WHEN JESUS EXPRESSED AGONIZING PRAYER...

- 1. The agony in His prayer is:
 - a. Seen by His posture: “He...fell on His face” - **Mt 26:39**
 - b. Heard in His words: “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me” - **Mt 26:39,42,44**
- 2. It was “godly fear” Jesus expressed, and for such His prayer was heard - **He 5:7**
 - a. Not that the cup (of suffering) was removed
 - b. But that He would be able to drink it

B. WHEN JESUS EXTENDED ENTIRE RESIGNATION...

- 1. As evidenced by His words:
 - a. “Not as I will, but as You will.” - **Mt 26:39**
 - b. “if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.” - **Mt 26:42**
- 2. When man first said “My will, not Thine be done...”
 - a. It opened the flood gate of sin
 - b. It turned man out of the Paradise of God
- 3. But when Jesus said “Not as I will, but as You will...”
 - a. Victory over sin and access to the Tree of Life became possible
 - b. For it prepared Jesus to go to the cross to make it possible

C. WHEN JESUS ENJOYED SPECIAL COMFORT...

- 1. Jesus received an answer to His prayer - cf. **Lk 22:43**
 - a. Not the answer He requested (let this cup pass from Me)
 - b. But strength from an angel!
- 2. Like the apostle Paul would pray later - cf. **2 Co 12:7-10**
 - a. Asking the Lord to remove his thorn in the flesh
 - b. Receiving an answer different than requested, but more than sufficient to meet the need!

D. WHEN JESUS EVINCE RENEWED RESOLVE...

- 1. Strengthened, Jesus was ready to face the hour at hand - **Mt 26:45**
- 2. He was ready to meet His betrayer and those with him - **Mt 26:46-47**

CONCLUSION

- 1. So “**The Garden Of Gethsemane**” was a place of both suffering and strength...
 - a. Jesus entered the garden suffering

- b. He left the garden strengthened in His resolve
2. Notice what turned the place of suffering into a place of strength...prayer!
 - a. Prayer that is fervent and persistent
 - b. Prayer in which one submits to the will of God
 - c. Prayer in which one is strengthened
 - d. Prayer that enables one to face the cup of life given them
 3. There will be times when we must enter our **“Garden Of Gethsemane”**...
 - a. Times of distress, sorrow, loneliness
 - b. But such times can also be a time of comfort and strength
 - Provided we spend them in prayer, and be willing to accept the Father’s will

Jesus found prayer to be the key for turning a garden of suffering into a garden of strength. As Christians we have a similar blessing in prayer:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” - Ph 4:6-7

May we never neglect to utilize this wonderful gift, especially since we now have Jesus Himself to intercede on our behalf!

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” - He 4:14-16

“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” - He 7:25

The Betrayal Of Jesus

Matthew 26:47-50

INTRODUCTION

1. Certainly one of the saddest moments in the life of Jesus was His betrayal by Judas...
 - a. One of Jesus' closest disciples, even one of His twelve apostles - **Mt 26:47-50**
 - b. Who had been privileged to a part of Jesus' ministry here on earth - **Ac 1:17**
2. What led Judas to betray his Lord and Savior? How could one who had been with Jesus...
 - a. Seen His miracles, heard His teachings
 - b. Betray Him with a kiss?
3. What about us, who claim to be Jesus' disciples today?
 - a. Could we be guilty of betraying Jesus in some way?
 - b. Are there things that misled Judas that could have a similar effect on us?

[What might we learn from “**The Betrayal Of Jesus**”? Lest we follow the same path of Judas, let's reflect for a few moments on what we can glean from the Scriptures...]

I. JESUS WAS BETRAYED BY A CLOSE FRIEND

A. JUDAS WAS NO STRANGER TO JESUS...

1. As already mentioned, he was one of the apostles - **Mt 10:2-4**
2. He was among those whom Jesus loved - **Jn 13:1**
3. Yet as prophesied, Jesus was betrayed by “a familiar friend” - **Psa 41:9**

B. BEING CLOSE TO JESUS IS NO GUARANTEE...

1. Just being His disciples is no assurance we could not betray Him
2. Like several of the churches in Asia Minor, we could...
 - a. Leave our first love - **Re 2:4-5**
 - b. Begin to tolerate false doctrine - **Re 2:14-16**
 - c. Permit false teachers to spread their doctrines - **Re 2:20**
 - d. Fail to perfect our works, and not be watchful - **Re 3:1-3**
 - e. Become lukewarm - **Re 3:15-16**
3. Yes, we can betray Jesus by denying Him who bought us - cf. **2 Pe 2:1**

[Therefore we need to heed Jesus' admonition to be “faithful unto death” (**Re 2:10**), and not assume that close proximity to Jesus in the past guarantees faithfulness in the future.]

II. JESUS WAS BETRAYED BY A LOVER OF MONEY

A. MONEY WAS A PROBLEM FOR JUDAS...

1. He often pilfered from the money box of the disciples - **Jn 12:4-6**
2. The opportunity to make some money led him to betray Jesus - **Mt 26:14-16**

B. MONEY CAN BE A PROBLEM FOR US...

1. The deceitfulness of riches can render us unfruitful - **Mt 13:22**
2. The desire for riches and the love of money can lead us to stray from the faith and drown in destruction and perdition - **1 Ti 6:9-10**
3. The Laodiceans' preoccupation with wealth made them lukewarm - **Re 3:16-17**

[Could we be guilty of betraying Jesus by our desire for riches, letting such things take precedent over our service to God and His church?]

III. JESUS WAS BETRAYED BY A SHOW OF AFFECTION

A. JUDAS BETRAYED JESUS WITH A KISS...

1. He could have pointed...perhaps he sought to soften the blow of betrayal - **Mt 26:48-49**
2. Jesus noted the obvious contradiction - **Lk 22:47-48**

B. DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION DON'T ENSURE FAITHFULNESS...

1. Many people are very emotional in their religion
 - a. As displayed in their worship
 - b. Believing it to be evidence of being "Spirit-filled"
 2. Yet emotions alone are not a reliable guide
 - a. They can easily mislead us - cf. **Pro 16:25; Jer 10:23; 17:9**
 - b. They are often present in the unstable believer - cf. **Mt 13:20-21**
 3. This is not to discount the place and value of emotions
 - a. We are to love God with all our heart and with all our mind - **Mt 22:37-38**
 - b. The Spirit does produce fruit in our lives that affects our emotions - **Ga 5:22-23**
 - c. But we must keep them in the proper order:
 - 1) Our emotions must come from faith, not faith coming from emotions
 - 2) Otherwise we are led by emotionalism, not faith
- And true faith comes from the Word of God - **Ro 10:17; Jn 20:30-31**

[If we believe that displays of affection in our religion can make up for our failure to heed God's Word, we deceive ourselves and betray Jesus in the process!]

IV. JESUS WAS BETRAYED BY A MISTAKEN DISCIPLE

A. JUDAS MISTOOK THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS ACTION...

1. He evidently didn't think Jesus would be condemned - **Mt 27:3-4**
2. This has prompted some to think that Judas was motivated by more than money
 - a. That perhaps his betrayal would force Jesus to act, show His true power
 - b. That in such a way it would demonstrate who Jesus truly was

B. WE CAN BE GUILTY OF MISTAKEN SERVICE...

1. Thinking our service is acceptable, when it is not - **Mt 7:21-23**
2. Thinking we can improve on God's way, when His ways may not be ours - **Isa 55:8-9**
3. We need to heed the Preacher's advice - cf. **Ecc 5:1-2**
 - a. Come to hear and do what He says
 - b. Not presume to know what pleases God and offer what we think is best

[In our zeal, we may be guilty of acting based on mistaken knowledge (cf. **Ro 10:1-3**). Dare we possibly betray Jesus by presuming we know what is according to His will and plan?]

V. JESUS WAS BETRAYED BY AN OVERWROUGHT FOLLOWER

A. JUDAS REACTED TO HIS SIN THE WRONG WAY...

1. He was overcome with grief - **Mt 27:3**
2. He took the wrong course of action by hanging himself - **Mt 27:5**

B. WE CAN REACT TO OUR SINS THE SAME WAY...

1. There are two kinds of sorrow - **2 Co 7:10**
 - a. Sorrow of the world that produces death
 - b. Godly sorrow that produces repentance-- The first sorrow is preoccupied with self; the second is sorrow for sinning against God
2. It is natural to be sorrowful for our sins
 - a. But we should not wallow in our grief
 - b. But repent, as did Peter who denied Christ
3. Paul is another example of one who did not let sins of the past hinder service in the present
 - a. He focused on God's grace which gave him another chance - **1 Co 15:9-10**
 - b. He directed his attention on striving for the upward call of God - **Ph 3:12-14**

CONCLUSION

1. While Jesus was betrayed by all these things, let's not forget the influence of Satan...
 - a. Satan used Judas to betray Jesus - **Lk 22:3-4**
 - b. Satan put it in Judas' heart to betray Jesus - **Jn 13:2**-- For this reason Jesus referred to Judas as "a devil" - **Jn 6:70-71**
2. Yet how did Satan influence Judas? By some of the very things we've noticed...
 - a. Through his love of money
 - b. Through his emotionalism
 - c. Through his mistaken ideas
 - d. Through his preoccupation with self-- Even Peter was influenced by Satan through some of these things (cf. Mt 16:23)

And so while we may decry the treachery of Judas, we should humbly learn from his mistakes, taking to heart the words of Peter:

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” - 1 Pe 5:9-10

Peter's Denial Of Jesus

Matthew 26:69-75

INTRODUCTION

1. Among the things Jesus suffered, was the indignity of Peter's denial...
 - a. Three times, with increasing intensity, Peter denied knowing Jesus - **Mt 26:69-75**
 - b. Peter denied knowing Jesus, despite being with Jesus:
 - 1) From the beginning of His earthly ministry - **Mt 4:17-19**
 - 2) At the healing of his own mother-in-law - **Mt 8:14-15**
 - 3) On the Sea of Galilee, walking on the water - **Mt 14:22-33**
 - 4) On the mount, seeing Jesus with Moses and Elijah - **Mt 17:1-13**
2. How did Peter come to deny his Lord and Savior?
 - a. What forces were at work, that led to his cowardly deed?
 - b. Might they be forces we face today, encouraging us to do the same?

[From “**Peter’s Denial Of Jesus**”, there are important lessons to be gleaned. Indeed, Peter himself can help us to avoid making the mistakes he made when he writes as one who knows the dangers before us. For example, we note first of all that...]

I. PETER WAS BETRAYED BY PRIDE

A. HE BOASTED HE WOULD NEVER DENY JESUS...

1. Proudly proclaiming that even if all left Jesus, not him! - **Mt 26:31-33**
2. In so doing, Peter took the first step in falling away - **Pro 16:18**
3. We can also be overconfident in our service to God - cf. **1 Co 10:12**

B. PETER LATER COMMANDED HUMILITY...

1. To be clothed with humility - **1 Pe 5:5**
2. To humble ourselves before God - **1 Pe 5:6**

[Peter learned the hard way about the danger of pride. Will we learn from the mistake of Peter, and value the importance of humility? Next, notice that...]

II. PETER WAS BESIEGED BY LAZINESS

A. HE KEPT FALLING ASLEEP...

1. At a time when he needed to be watchful - **Mt 26:36-46**
2. His laziness therefore led to lack of preparation
3. The same thing can happen to us!
 - a. Without diligent preparation, we too can be unprepared - cf. **Lk 21:34-36**
 - b. More often than not, we gradually “drift away” because we are too lazy to “give the more earnest heed” - cf. **He 2:1-3**

B. PETER LATER ENJOINED DILIGENCE...

1. Commanding vigilant resistance against the devil - **1 Pe 5:8-9**

2. Calling for diligence that we might:
 - a. Grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus - **2 Pe 1:5,10**
 - b. Be found in peace, without spot and blameless - **2 Pe 3:14**

[Do we allow simple laziness to keep us from careful preparation? Do we fail to attend services, study God's Word, or even pray, because of laziness? If so, how can we hope to stand up for Jesus when put to the test? As we continue, we observe that...]

III. PETER WAS BESET BY COWARDICE

A. HE FOLLOWED JESUS AT A DISTANCE...

1. Peter still followed Jesus - **Mt 26:58**
2. But now that Jesus was unpopular...
 - a. He stays far enough away so not to be identified with Him
 - b. He was unprepared to face the challenge of ridicule and persecution
3. Might we be guilty trying to follow Jesus, but with cowardice?
 - a. Ashamed to be seen carrying a Bible?
 - b. Ashamed to be seen giving thanks?
 - c. Ashamed to be seen with other Christians?

B. PETER LATER EXHORTED GLORIFYING GOD...

1. Charging us not to be ashamed, but to glorify God - **1 Pe 4:16**
2. Thinking not of what things mean to us, but what they mean to God! - cf. **Mt 5:16**

[With cowardice keeping him at a distance from his Lord, Peter was a prime candidate for succumbing to what came next...]

IV. PETER WAS BELEAGUERED BY WORLDLINESS

A. HE WAS INFLUENCED BY THE WORLD...

1. By sitting with the servants of the High Priest, and warming himself by their fire - **Mt 26:58; Mk 14:54**
2. Ashamed to be seen with Christ, it was easy to mingle with those of the world and enjoy their comforts
3. But one cannot be "comforted by the fire" of the world, and not be "burned"!
 - a. E.g., close contact with things that can harm has an effect - cf. **Pro 6:27-29**
 - b. So we cannot flirt with the world and walk away untouched - **1 Co 15:33**

B. PETER LATER CALLED FOR US TO BE OTHERWORLDLY...

1. To live as sojourners and pilgrims, abstaining from fleshly lusts and with honorable conduct among the nations - **1 Pe 2:11-12**
2. To look for that new heavens and new earth, being diligent to be found by Christ in peace, without spot and blameless - **2 Pe 3:13-14**

CONCLUSION

1. When Peter concluded his second epistle, he did so with a warning...
 - a. To beware lest you fall from your own steadfastness - **2 Pe 3:17**
 - b. To grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ - **2 Pe 3:18**

2. These admonitions come from one who was well qualified to speak...
 - a. For he knew how easy it was to fall through such things as:
 - 1) Pride
 - 2) Laziness
 - 3) Cowardice
 - 4) Worldliness
 - b. But he also knew how one could grow in grace through such things as:
 - 1) Humility
 - 2) Diligence
 - 3) Glorifying God
 - 4) Living as strangers and sojourners

Yes, we know that Peter, though he denied Jesus three times and wept bitterly, received grace when forgiven by Jesus and permitted to fulfill his role as an apostle. If we have been guilty of letting our Lord down, look to Him for the grace to repent and grow that only He can bestow!

They Led Him Away

Matthew 27:1-2

INTRODUCTION

1. In the night and hours prior to His crucifixion, the Son of God suffered many ignobilities...
 - a. Illegal trials held during the night
 - b. Shuffled back and forth before different authorities
 - c. Falsely accused, mocked, and physically abused
2. There is a phrase used several times that may be used to summarize this ill treatment...
 - a. That phrase is “they led Him away”
 - b. It (or a variation) is found eight times - **Mt 26:57; 27:2,31; Mk 15:1,16; Lk 23:26; Jn 18:13; 19:16**
3. Being led around like this was in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy: “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter...” - **Isa 53:7**

[To remind us of the things Jesus suffered in our stead and for our sins, let’s review how Jesus was led around during that fateful night and the morning that followed...]

I. THEY LED HIM AWAY TO FACE ANNAS

A. ANNAS, FATHER-IN-LAW TO CAIAPHAS...

1. John records this meeting in his gospel - **Jn 18:12-14**
2. Annas had been high priest, but was deposed in 15 A.D. by Roman authorities
3. He continued to exercise considerable influence, as he was still viewed by the Jews as a high priest - **Lk 3:2; Jn 11:49-50**
4. After Pentecost he was involved in the questioning of Peter and John - **Ac 4:6**

B. BEFORE ANNAS...

1. Jesus was asked about His disciples and His doctrine - **Jn 18:19-21**
2. Jesus was struck by one of the officers - **Jn 18:22-23**
3. At this point, Annas sent Jesus bound to Caiaphas - **Jn 18:24**

[As we return to the gospel of Matthew, we read of how...]

II. THEY LED HIM AWAY TO FACE CAIAPHAS

A. CAIAPHAS, THE HIGH PRIEST...

1. It was Caiaphas who with others plotted the arrest and death of Jesus - **Mt 26:3-5**
2. He also was involved in the later questioning of Peter and John - **Ac 4:6**

B. BEFORE CAIAPHAS...

1. Jesus faced an assembly of scribes and elders - **Mt 26:57**
 - a. This was an illegal assembly of the Sanhedrin (high council of the Jews)
 - b. It was illegal for taking place at night

2. False witnesses were finally brought against Jesus - **Mt 26:59-61**
3. Jesus first kept silent, then told them of His coming in judgment - **Mt 26:62-64**
4. In anger Caiaphas tears his clothes, and accuses Jesus of blasphemy - **Mt 26:65**
5. Jesus is pronounced worthy of death - **Mt 26:66**
6. He is spat in the face, beaten, slapped, and mocked as the Messiah - **Mt 26:67-68**

[Meanwhile, Peter is denying Jesus three times in the courtyard (**Mt 26:69-75**). With the dawn of morning, the chief priests and elders decide to put Jesus to death (**Mt 27:1**). To do this...]

III. THEY LED HIM AWAY TO FACE PILATE

A. PONTIUS PILATE, THE ROMAN GOVERNOR...

1. To whom Jesus was bound and delivered - **Mt 27:2**
2. He governed Judea from 26-36 A.D.
3. He did much to anger the Jews - cf. **Lk 13:1**
4. But without his approval, the Jews could not execute Jesus

B. BEFORE PILATE...

1. Jesus was asked if He was the king of the Jews - **Mt 27:11**
 - a. Because Jesus was accused of forbidding to pay taxes and claiming to be a king - cf. **Lk 23:1-2**
 - b. Jesus did not reply to the accusations of the Jews - **Mt 27:12-14**
 - c. But He did converse with Pilate about the nature of His kingdom - **Jn 18:33-38**
2. Pilate found no fault in Him - cf. **Lk 23:4**
3. But Jesus was accused further of stirring up people throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee - cf. **Lk 23:5**

[With the mention of Galilee, Pilate thought he had a way to pawn Jesus off on to someone else (**Lk 23:6-7**). And from Luke's account we learn that...]

IV. THEY LED HIM AWAY TO FACE HEROD

A. HEROD, KING OF THE JEWS...

1. This was Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great
 - a. His father was the Herod who massacred the infants - **Mt 2:16-18**
 - b. Antipas was the one who beheaded John the Baptist - **Mt 14:1-12**
 - c. He was tetrarch over Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to 39 A. D. - **Lk 3:1**
2. Herod was glad to see Jesus - **Lk 23:8**
 - a. He had heard many things about Jesus - cf. **Lk 9:7-9**
 - b. He hoped to see some miracle done by Jesus

B. BEFORE HEROD...

1. Jesus was questioned, but answered Herod nothing - **Lk 23:9**
2. Jesus was vehemently accused by the chief priests and scribes - **Lk 23:10**
3. Jesus was treated with contempt and mocked by Herod and his soldiers - **Lk 23:11**

[Arrayed in a gorgeous robe mocking His claim to be King, Jesus was then sent back to Pilate (**Lk 23:11-12**). And so...]

V. THEY LED HIM AWAY TO FACE PILATE (AGAIN)

A. PILATE SOUGHT TO RELEASE HIM...

1. Using the custom of releasing one prisoner during the feast - **Mt 27:15; Jn 18:38-39**
 - a. Offering a choice between Jesus and Barabbas - **Mt 27:16-18**
 - b. The latter a notorious prisoner, who was a robber, rebel and murderer - **Mk 15:7**
2. Encouraged by his wife to have nothing to do with Jesus - **Mt 27:19**

B. BEFORE PILATE (AGAIN)...

1. The chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus crucified - **Mt 27:20-23**
2. Bowing to the multitude, Pilate succumbed to their wishes - **Mt 27:24-25**
3. Jesus was then scourged - **Mt 27:26**

[At this point Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified (**Mt 27:26**). But before Jesus was taken to the place called Golgotha...]

VI. THEY LED HIM AWAY TO FACE THE SOLDIERS

A. THE SOLDIERS OF THE GOVERNOR...

1. Roman soldiers, who likely had little love for any Jew
2. Who took Jesus into the Praetorium (the barracks in the governor's house) - **Mt 27:27**
3. Surrounding Jesus with the whole garrison of soldiers - **Mt 27:27**

B. BEFORE THE SOLDIERS...

1. Jesus was stripped and clothed with a scarlet robe - **Mt 27:28**
2. A twisted crown of thorns placed on His head, a reed in His right hand - **Mt 27:29a**
3. The soldiers bowed the knee and mocked Him as King of the Jews - **Mt 27:29b**
4. They spat on Him, and struck Him on the head with the reed - **Mt 27:30**
5. When they were finished mocking Him...
 - a. The soldiers took off the robe and put His own clothes on Him - **Mt 27:31a**
 - b. The soldiers led Him away to be crucified - **Mt 27:31b**

CONCLUSION

1. Up to this point, the Son of God had been...
 - a. Struck by officers of the high priest
 - b. Spat in the face, beaten, slapped, and mocked as the Messiah by the chief priests
 - c. Falsely accused by the chief priests and scribes before Pilate and Herod
 - d. Treated with contempt and mocked by Herod and his soldiers
 - e. Scourged by Pilate, mocked, spat upon and beaten by his soldiers
 - And then they "led Him away to be crucified", to face the cross of Calvary
2. Why did Jesus allow Himself to be so led...?
 - a. At any time He could have called for twelve legions of angels - cf. **Mt 26:53**
 - b. "They Led Him Away" only because He allowed them to do so!
 - c. Jesus understood that all this was necessary to fulfill Scripture - cf. **Mt 26:54; Lk 24:44-47**

And the purpose of the Scripture was that Jesus would die for our sins (**Isa 53:5**). As expressed beautifully in the song **“Ten Thousand Angels”** by Ray Overholt:

**They bound the hands of Jesus
In the garden where He prayed;
They led Him through the streets in shame.
They spat upon the Savior
So pure and free from sin;
They said “Crucify Him, He’s to blame.”
Upon His precious head
They placed a crown of thorns;
They laughed and said, “Behold the King.”
They struck Him and they cursed Him
And mocked His holy name.
All alone He suffered everything.
He could have called ten thousand angels
To destroy the world
And set Him free.
He could have called ten thousand angels
But He died alone
For you and me.**

He died alone for you and me...will we not heed and obey His message of repentance and remission of sins that was first proclaimed in Jerusalem? - cf. **Lk 24:46-47; Ac 2:36-38**

What Then Shall I Do With Jesus?

Matthew 27:22

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Mt 27:11-22**, we read of Jesus before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor...
 - a. While Jesus admitted to being the King of the Jews, He refused to answer the accusations of the chief priests and elders - **Mt 27:11-12**
 - b. His silence caused Pilate to marvel greatly - **Mt 27:13-14**
 - c. Pilate sought to release Jesus, but the multitude asked for Barabbas instead - **Mt 27:15-21**
 - d. Which prompted Pilate to ask the question: “When then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” - **Mt 27:22**
2. Pilate’s question, “What then shall I do with Jesus?”, is one that every person must ask...
 - a. Many would prefer to ignore it
 - b. Many try to let others make the choice (as did Pilate)
3. But it is a question from which we cannot run away...
 - a. We shall all one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ - **2 Co 5:10**
 - b. His words will be the standard by which we will be judged - **Jn 12:48**

[And so each one of us should be asking ourselves, “**What Then Shall I Do With Jesus?**” To help answer this question, consider another question...]

I. WHAT HAS JESUS OFFERED YOU?

A. JESUS HAS PROVIDED THE CHANCE...

1. For an abundant life, filled with true peace - **Jn 10:10; 16:33**
2. To find salvation - **Lk 19:10**
3. To enjoy cleansing from sin through His blood - **1 Jn 1:7**

B. JESUS HAS PROCLAIMED THE CONDITIONS...

1. We must believe in Him - **Jn 8:24**
2. We must repent of our sins - **Lk 13:3**
3. We must confess our faith before men - **Mt 10:32-33; Ro 10:9-10**
4. We must be baptized for the remission of our sins - **Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16; Ac 2:38**
5. We must remain faithful even to death - **Re 2:10**

C. JESUS HAS PREDETERMINED THE ALTERNATIVES...

1. Reject Him, and we will die in our sins to face the terrible consequences - **Jn 8:24; 2 Th 1:7-9; Re 21:8**
2. Believe in Him, and we receive everlasting life - **Jn 5:24; Mt 19:29**

[Having consider what Jesus has offered us, we return to the question...]

II. WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS?

A. WHAT SOME HAVE TRIED TO DO...

1. Pilate tried to pass the choice on to others - **Mt 27:24**
 - a. Are we guilty of doing something similar today?
 - b. Trying to let others decide for us what we will do or believe about Jesus?
2. Some in Athens simply mocked - **Ac 17:32**
 - a. Many take this route in what they do with Jesus
 - b. Rather than make the effort to decide what they should do, they simply laugh
3. Felix tried to wait for a more convenient time - **Ac 24:25**
 - a. This is another common reaction
 - b. Hoping that through delay, they will not have to make the choice
- But we cannot escape the fact that we will one day be judged by Him - **Ac 17:30-31**

B. WHAT WE SHOULD DO...

1. Accept His gracious offer of salvation by obeying Him - **He 5:9**
2. Become His disciples, committed to doing what He commanded - **Mt 28:19-20**
3. Grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ - **2 Pe 3:18**
4. Walk in Him, well-established in the faith - **Co 2:6-7**
5. Develop the mind of Christ, the attitude of sacrifice and service - **Ph 2:1-8**

CONCLUSION

1. We have seen the feeble attempt by Pilate and others to answer the question **“What Then Shall I Do With Jesus?”**
2. Let us not think we can answer the question by...
 - a. Simply ignoring Him
 - b. Simply not doing anything actively against Him-- For as Jesus said on another occasion: **“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.” - Mt 12:30**

Jesus has given us every reason to accept and obey Him as our Savior and Lord. If you have not yet done so, will you not today respond to His gracious invitation to receive eternal life?

The Crucifixion Of Jesus

Matthew 27:32-50

INTRODUCTION

1. Without question, the crucifixion of Jesus was a terrible event...
 - a. It was an excruciating and painful way to die, which Jesus was willing to accept without painkilling drugs - **Mt 27:32-35**
 - b. It was a shameful way to die, mocked by those who watched, crucified with common thieves - **Mt 27:36-44**
 - c. Along with the physical suffering, there was the spiritual agony - **Mt 27:45-50**
2. While there may be a place for contemplating upon the actual physical agony Jesus endured...
 - a. Jesus did not want people to weep for Him, but for themselves - cf. **Lk 23:26-31**
 - b. Even on the cross, His concern for others was evident - cf. **Lk 23:34**
 - So the purpose of the crucifixion was not just to engender pity for Jesus

[The significance and lessons to be learned from the crucifixion go far beyond feeling sorry for what Jesus suffered. For example, we should never forget that **“The Crucifixion Of Jesus”** is...]

I. THE CONDEMNATION OF SIN

A. JESUS DIED BECAUSE OF SIN...

1. As foretold, He died for our sins - **1 Co 15:3; Isa 53:5-6**
2. He gave Himself for our sins - **Ga 1:4**
3. He bore our sins on the cross - **1 Pe 2:24**
- **May the thought of the crucifixion remind us of our own sinfulness and the need for redemption - 1 Jn 1:8-10**

B. JESUS KILLED SIN...

1. He condemned sin in the flesh through His death - **Ro 8:3**
2. Now making it possible for sinners to destroy their own body of sin, when united with Him by baptism into His death - **Ro 6:3-6**
- **May the thought of the crucifixion remind us of our responsibility to crucify the sinful passions of the flesh - Ga 5:24; Co 3:5-11**

[To motivate us in our efforts to let Jesus' death help us deal with the problem of sin, we should also remember that **“The Crucifixion Of Jesus”** is...]

II. THE REVELATION OF LOVE

A. JESUS DIED BECAUSE OF LOVE...

1. The love of the Father for a lost world - **Jn 3:16; Ro 5:8**
2. The love of the Son - **Ep 5:2**
- **May our contemplation of the crucifixion never neglect the love that was behind the fact - 1 Jn 4:9-10**

B. JESUS THEREBY DEMONSTRATED WHAT TRUE LOVE IS...

1. We now understand what true love is - **1 Jn 3:16; Jn 15:13**
2. It is this love which is the pattern for our love - **Jn 13:34-35; 15:12**
- **May our contemplation of the crucifixion remind us of the high standard of love we are called to show toward one another - 1 Jn 4:11**

[As we strive to overcome sin and love one another, assisted and motivated by the death of Jesus on the cross, we should also be mindful that **“The Crucifixion Of Jesus”** is...]

III. THE REDEMPTION OF THE WORLD

A. JESUS DIED FOR ALL...

1. God desires all men to be saved, not desiring any to perish - **1 Ti 2:3-6; 2 Pe 3:9**
2. Therefore He offered Jesus as a propitiation for all - **1 Jn 2:1-2**
- **May our meditation upon the crucifixion include thinking about the need of others**

B. JESUS IS THE WORLD’S ONLY HOPE...

1. He is the only way to the Father - **Jn 14:6**
2. Only in His name is there salvation to be found - **Ac 4:12**
3. Deny the Son, and one does not have the Father - **1 Jn 2:23**
4. Abide in His doctrine, and one has both the Father and the Son - **2 Jn 9**
- **May our meditation upon the crucifixion move us to do what we can to proclaim the message of redemption to those lost in sin - cf. 2 Co 5:18-6:1**

[And so the death of Jesus on the cross should prompt us to look both **inward** and **outward**, to address both our spiritual needs and those of others. To what extent may be required in these areas, we should also view **“The Crucifixion Of Jesus”** as...]

IV. THE INSPIRATION OF SACRIFICE

A. JESUS PROVIDED THE EXAMPLE...

1. His death demonstrated the mind of humility - **Ph 2:3-8**
2. His suffering demonstrated the example of suffering patiently - **1 Pe 2:20-24**
- **May our reflection upon the crucifixion move us to consider what His sacrifice should inspire us to do**

B. JESUS’ SACRIFICE IS DESIGNED TO INSPIRE US...

1. To walk in love - **Ep 5:2**
2. To walk in humility - **Ph 2:3-5**
3. To suffer patiently when mistreated for doing good - **1 Pe 2:20-24**
4. To give of ourselves to others - **2 Co 8:9; 1 Jn 3:16-18**

CONCLUSION

1. Certainly more could be said about **“The Crucifixion Of Jesus”**
2. But perhaps these few thoughts will increase our appreciation of this significant event...
 - a. His death is the condemnation of sin
 - b. His death is the revelation of love

- c. His death is the redemption of the world
 - d. His death is the inspiration of sacrifice
3. Have you taken advantage of what **“The Crucifixion Of Jesus”** means for you...?
- a. Have you been crucified with Christ?
 - b. Are you putting to death the deeds of the flesh?
 - c. Are you growing in love?
 - d. Are you concerned and doing something about the redemption of the world?
 - e. Are you inspired in your service to your brethren and the lost by the example of Jesus’ sacrifice?

In the words of the apostle Paul: “We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.” (*2 Co 6:1*)

The Significance Of The Resurrection

Matthew 28:1-10

INTRODUCTION

1. According to the four gospels, Jesus rose from the dead following His crucifixion...
 - a. Matthew records how the women found the tomb empty and were instructed by an angel to tell the disciples - **Mt 28:1-8**
 - b. Also how Jesus appeared to them as they were on their way - **Mt 28:9-10**
 - **In all, the New Testament records ten distinct resurrection appearances of Christ prior to His ascension to heaven**
2. The significance of the resurrection of Jesus to the Christian faith cannot be overestimated...
 - a. It has great significance for one who has yet to believe in Jesus
 - b. It also has great significance for those who are Christians

[In this study, we shall consider “**The Significance Of The Resurrection**” for both unbelievers and believers...]

I. FOR THE UNBELIEVER

A. IT VERIFIES THE DEITY OF JESUS...

1. The resurrection proves that Jesus truly is the Son of God - **Ro 1:4**
2. It also demonstrates that He truly has all authority in heaven and on earth - **Mt 28:18; Ac 2:36**

B. IT VERIFIES THE TRUTHFULNESS OF JESUS...

1. Jesus foretold His resurrection on three occasions - **Mt 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19**
 - a. If Jesus was telling the truth in describing His suffering and resurrection...
 - b. ...then He was telling the truth in everything else He said
 - Would God raise a liar?
2. Therefore the following teachings of Jesus are true:
 - a. He was from the Father above, and spoke the words of the Father - **Jn 8:28-29**
 - b. No one can come to the Father but through Him - **Jn 14:6**
 - c. His blood was shed for the remission of sins - **Mt 26:28**
 - d. He came to offer abundant life - **Jn 10:10**
 - e. He went to prepare a place for us - **Jn 14:2**
 - f. He shall come again - **Jn 14:3**
 - g. There will be a resurrection of the dead and ensuing judgment - **Jn 5:28-29; 12:48; Ac 17:30-31**

[If Jesus was in fact raised from the dead, “**The Significance Of The Resurrection**” for the unbeliever is enormous! It forces the unbeliever to come face to face with reality, and the need to accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus has even more significance...]

II. FOR THE BELIEVER

A. IF JESUS HAS NOT BEEN RAISED...

1. Gospel preaching is vain - **1 Co 15:14**
 - a. The preaching of the apostles is empty, meaningless
 - b. There would be no purpose in preaching about a liar, or lunatic
2. Our faith is vain - **1 Co 15:14**
 - a. Our belief in Christ would also be empty, meaningless
 - b. For our faith would be in a liar, or lunatic
3. The apostles were false witnesses - **1 Co 15:15**
 - a. They swore that God raised Jesus from the dead - **Ac 2:32**
 - b. They claimed to spend 40 days with Him after the resurrection, eating and drinking with Him - **Ac 10:39-41**
 - c. There is no way they could have been deceived or mistaken - either they told the truth or they were deliberate liars, deceivers, and frauds!
4. We are still in our sins - **1 Co 15:17**
 - a. It would have been a liar or lunatic that died on the cross
 - b. No such person could have provided a sacrifice that was holy and without blemish
5. Believers have perished at death - **1 Co 15:18**
 - a. Their faith would have been in a false Messiah
 - b. They would have had no atonement for their sins
 - c. Dying in their sins, there would be no hope
6. Christians are to be pitied - **1 Co 15:19**
 - a. Because we believe in a false Messiah
 - b. Because our faith in Him leads us to refrain from much worldly pleasure
 - c. Because we are often ridiculed or persecuted for our faith

B. IF JESUS HAS BEEN RAISED...

1. It verifies our justification - **Ro 4:24-25**
 - a. Jesus claimed His blood would be adequate - cf. **Mt 26:28**
 - b. By raising Jesus from the dead, God demonstrated His acceptance of Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins! - cf. **Ro 8:33-34**
2. It demonstrates the power available to the Christian - **Ep 1:18-20**
 - a. Power available at our conversion - cf. **Co 2:11-12; 1 Pe 3:21**
 - b. Power available to live the Christian life - cf. **Ro 8:11-13; Ph 2:12-13; 4:13; Ep 3:20; 6:10**
3. It gives us hope concerning our own resurrection - **1 Pe 1:3**
 - a. His resurrection gives us a living hope! - **1 Pe 1:21**
 - b. Especially concerning the resurrection of believers! - **1 Th 4:13-14**
4. It demands our complete loyalty to Him - **Ro 14:9**
 - a. He was raised and then exalted to become our Lord - cf. **Ac 2:32-36; Ep 1:20-23**
 - b. Thus our lives and service belong to Him - cf. **Ro 14:7-8; 2 Co 5:15**

CONCLUSION

1. The impact of the resurrection of Jesus should not go unfelt in our lives...
 - a. As a historical event it has everlasting implications
 - b. For both the unbeliever and believer
2. The unbeliever needs to examine the evidence for the resurrection carefully...
 - a. The nature of the testimony provided by the witnesses

- b. The unfeasibility of alternative explanations for the empty tomb
 - For if Jesus be raised from the dead, one must believe in Him! - **Jn 8:24**
- 3. The believer must never lose sight of the significance of the resurrection...
 - a. Do our lives demonstrate that we serve a risen Lord and Savior?
 - b. Do we possess the hope, peace, and strength that the reality and power of His resurrection gives to the Christian?

May we never forget “**The Significance Of The Resurrection**” of Jesus Christ in our lives!

The Witnesses Of The Resurrection

Matthew 28:1-10

INTRODUCTION

1. If the resurrection of Jesus Christ really took place, it has great significance...
 - a. For those who have yet to believe in Christ
 - b. For those who are Christians
 - Which we examined in another lesson
2. Upon what basis should one believe that Jesus actually rose from the dead?
 - a. The evidence presented in the New Testament involves eyewitness testimony
 - b. Ten distinct resurrection appearances of Christ are recorded in the New Testament
 - c. One such case is that found in **Mt 28:1-10**
3. It is clear in the Scriptures that our faith in Jesus is to be based upon such testimony...
 - a. As Jesus intimated in His prayer, and John in his gospel - **Jn 17:20; 20:30-31**
 - b. Jesus expected His apostles to be His witnesses - **Jn 15:27; Ac 1:8**
 - c. Especially concerning His resurrection - **Ac 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 10:39-41; 13:31**
4. Since our faith in Jesus rests upon the testimony of these witnesses...
 - a. Were they credible witnesses, such that we should take them seriously?
 - b. How strong is their testimony?
 - c. How do we know they did not make it up, or were simply deluded?

[As with any event alleged to have occurred, there are a number of factors to consider before we accept the event as a historical fact. One such factor is...]

I. THE NUMBER OF WITNESSES

A. WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT...

1. The strength or weakness of any testimony is affected by the number of witnesses
2. E.g., the Law of Moses required at least two or three witnesses - **Deu 17:6**
3. Today, the number of witnesses also plays a crucial role in our justice system
- **The more witnesses you have, the stronger your evidence!**

B. THERE WERE MANY WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION...

1. Paul lists many of these witness in **1 Co 15:3-8**
 - a. Jesus was seen by Cephas (Simon Peter) - cf. **Lk 24:34**
 - b. Jesus was seen by the twelve (apostles) - cf. **Lk 24:36-43; Ac 1:2-3**
 - c. He was seen by five hundred people at one time (probably in Galilee) - cf. **Mt 28:10, 16-17**
 - d. He was seen by James, the Lord's brother
 - e. He was seen by Paul, on the road to Damascus - **Ac 22:6-10**
2. Other appearances are recorded in the Scriptures
 - a. To Mary Magdalene - **Mk 16:9; Jn 20:14**
 - b. To other women returning from the tomb - **Mt 28:9,10**

- c. To two disciples on the road to Emmaus - **Lk 24:13-33**
- d. To the apostles, Thomas absent - **Jn 20:19-24**
- e. To the apostles, Thomas present - **Jn 20:26-29**
- f. To seven disciples by the Lake of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee) - **Jn 21:1-23**
- g. To the apostles at the ascension - **Ac 1:3-12**

[So for a period of forty days (**Ac 1:3**), over 500 people had ample opportunity to see Jesus, and determine for themselves if He was really raised from the dead. They were convinced, but are they reliable witnesses? How do we know they were not simply gullible, believing whatever they wanted to believe? This leads us to consider another factor important to accepting the testimony of witnesses...]

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE WITNESSES

A. SOME HAD NOT BELIEVED IN JESUS...

- 1. Like His brothers in the flesh - **Jn 7:3-5**
- 2. They even thought Him crazy - **Mk 3:21**
- **But seeing Him after His resurrection, they became His disciples! - Ac 1:14**

B. SOME WERE SKEPTICAL AFTER JESUS' DEATH...

- 1. Thomas would not accept the words of others - **Jn 20:24-25**
- 2. Not until he had empirical evidence would he believe - **Jn 20:26-28**
- 3. This demonstrates witnesses who were not gullible or easily deceived
 - a. Which is why the Lord appeared to select witnesses - cf. **Ac 10:40-41**
 - b. Witnesses who were qualified to know if it really were Jesus

C. ONE WAS EVEN A FORMER ENEMY...

- 1. Saul of Tarsus, who later became known as Paul the apostle - **Ac 9:1-2**
- 2. Until he saw Jesus raised from the dead, he believed it to be God's will to oppose Jesus and His followers - cf. **Ac 26:9-11**

[These were not gullible witnesses, ready to believe any hint that Jesus had risen. They required overwhelming evidence to convince them that Jesus was truly raised from the dead. This leads us now to consider...]

III. THE STRENGTH OF THEIR WITNESS

A. DEMONSTRATED BY THE NATURE OF THEIR TESTIMONY...

- 1. Their testimony appealed to empirical evidence
 - a. I.e., evidence derived from experiment and observation rather than theory
 - b. For forty days they were given infallible proofs - **Ac 1:3**
 - c. They ate and drank with Jesus - **Ac 10:41**
 - d. They saw, heard, and touched Him - **Jn 20:24-28; 1 Jn 1:1-2**
- 2. There is no way they could have been deceived or deluded
 - a. If all they had were individual dreams, visions, or hallucinations...perhaps
 - b. But they testified that Jesus appeared to them in groups as well as to individuals

B. DEMONSTRATED BY THEIR TRANSFORMATION...

- 1. Prior to the resurrection, Jesus' disciples were afraid and without hope
 - a. They fled at his arrest - **Mk 14:50**

- b. Peter cowardly denied Him three times - **Mk 14:66-72**
- c. The women mourned His crucifixion - **Lk 23:27**
- d. After His death, the disciples were sad - **Lk 24:13-17**
- e. After His death, the disciples hid behind closed doors, for fear of the Jews - **Jn 20:19**
2. But after the resurrection, they fearlessly praised God and proclaimed Jesus!
 - a. Praising God in the temple - **Lk 24:52-53**
 - b. Proclaiming Christ, despite persecution - **Ac 5:28-32,41-42**
3. This transformation in their lives is strong evidence for the resurrection, as admitted by one Orthodox Jewish scholar:
 - a. “If the disciples were totally disappointed and on the verge of desperate flight because of the very real reason of the crucifixion, it took another very real reason in order to transform them from a band of disheartened and dejected Jews into the most self-confident missionary society in world history.” - **Pinchas Lapide**, former Chairman of the Applied Linguistics Department at Israel’s Bar-Ilan University (TIME, May 7, 1979)
 - b. He concluded that a bodily resurrection could possibly have been that reason!

C. DEMONSTRATED BY THEIR HIGH MORAL STANDARD...

1. They taught others to live holy lives - **1 Th 4:1-7; Ep 4:25**
2. They lived their own lives in unimpeachable way - **1 Th 2:3-12**
- **Does this sound like people who propagate lies when they know better?**

D. DEMONSTRATED BY THE PRICE THEY PAID...

1. The apostles endured much suffering because of their testimony - **1 Co 4:9-13**
2. All but one died a martyr’s death because of their testimony
3. Even Jesus’ brother, James, was thrown off the temple and then clubbed to death for his testimony
- **There was no motive for them to persistently lie about Jesus’ resurrection!**

CONCLUSION

1. The nature of their witness does not allow for the option of being deceived or deluded...
 - a. Again, they professed empirical evidence
 - b. They claimed to eat and drink with Him, touch Him, see Him
2. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, there is only one alternative...
 - a. These witnesses were liars, deceivers
 - b. Even Paul freely admits this is the only alternative - **1 Co 15:14-15**
3. Is it reasonable to believe they successfully propagated a lie?
 - a. Too many people attested to the same fact
 - b. They were not the kind of people to fabricate such a falsehood
 - c. They lived noble lives, and were ALL willing to suffer and die for their testimony!

When we carefully examine the lives and testimony of “**The Witnesses Of The Resurrection**”, the only reasonable conclusion to draw is that they really saw what they claimed: Jesus is risen!

And His resurrection from the dead is assurance from God that Judgment is coming and we must repent:

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” - Ac 17:30-31

Are you ready for that Day?

Alternatives To The Resurrection

Matthew 28:11-15

INTRODUCTION

1. There are certain facts of history that no one can deny...
 - a. That many people testified they saw Jesus raised from the dead
 - b. That these same people suffered greatly because of their testimony
 - Such facts support the actual resurrection of Jesus from the dead
2. But from the beginning, there have been alternative theories to explain the empty tomb...
 - a. Matthew records the earliest theory: the disciples stole the body - **Mt 28:11-15**
 - b. Other theories have been raised as well
3. Because of the significance of the resurrection (described in a previous lesson)...
 - a. Those opposed to the gospel know that this event must be discredited
 - b. We who believe in Jesus must always be ready to provide a defense - **1 Pe 3:15**
 - 1) Not only why we accept the testimony of the witnesses (see previous lesson)
 - 2) But why we find alternative explanations impossible to accept

[In this study, we shall consider various “**Alternatives To The Resurrection**”, and why they are inadequate to explain the empty tomb. We begin with the first explanation...]

I. THE DISCIPLES STOLE THE BODY

A. ELEMENTS OF THIS THEORY...

1. The disciples stole the body, then claimed that He rose from the dead
2. This was the “official” theory offered from the very beginning - **Mt 28:11-15**

B. PROBLEMS WITH THIS THEORY...

1. The explanation defies logic
 - a. If the soldiers were asleep...
 - 1) How did they know it was the disciples who took the body?
 - 2) How could the large stone guarding the entrance be rolled away without awakening the soldiers?
 - b. The soldiers guarding the tomb were Romans - cf. **Mt 27:62-66**
 - 1) They were professional soldiers
 - 2) Charged to guard the tomb with their lives
 - 3) The punishment for falling asleep while on duty was death
2. This would make those who testified they saw Jesus liars and frauds
 - a. As we saw in the previous lesson, they claimed empirical evidence
 - b. Suppose just a few disciples stole the body, unbeknown by others...
 - 1) Such as Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, or the women
 - 2) Others still say they saw Jesus, ate and drank with Him
 - c. You have to explain why they were willing to lie and die knowing it was a lie

[The likelihood of timid disciples stealing the body of Jesus out from under the noses of highly disciplined and skilled Roman soldiers while they slept (an offense punishable by death) is hard to believe! Perhaps that is why those who refuse to believe in the resurrection have proposed alternative explanations, one being...]

II. THEY WENT TO THE WRONG TOMB

A. ELEMENTS OF THIS THEORY...

1. The women went to the wrong tomb, and found it empty
2. They erroneously concluded that Jesus had risen, and their story spread

B. PROBLEMS WITH THIS THEORY...

1. The women had been to the tomb before - **Mt 28:61**
2. The religious and political leaders could have easily silenced the apostles' claim
 - a. If the women went to the wrong tomb, then the right tomb was still sealed and guarded by the Roman soldiers
 - b. When the apostles' created an uproar with their story of the resurrection of Jesus (cf. **Ac 4:1-2; 5:27-33**), the Jewish leaders could have directed people to the right tomb and presented the body of Jesus!
3. You have the testimony of the apostles to contend with, as well

[A more popular explanation in some circles is...]

III. JESUS SWOONED AND LATER REVIVED

A. ELEMENTS OF THIS THEORY...

1. Jesus did not actually die on the cross, He only swooned
 - a. Suffering from shock, pain, and loss of blood, He fainted (swooned) from exhaustion
 - b. Thinking that He was dead, the Roman soldiers took Him down and buried Him in the tomb
2. In the coolness of the tomb, He revived
 - a. Somehow He left the tomb
 - b. Appeared to His disciples, then lived in obscurity to die years later

B. PROBLEMS WITH THIS THEORY...

1. Jesus would have had to revive sufficiently enough to:
 - a. Break through the burial garments that bound Him, including a hundred pounds of spices used in preparing His body for burial - **Jn 19:38-40**
 - b. Roll away the large stone that sealed the tomb
 - c. Fight off the Roman guards protecting the tomb
 - d. Walk the seven miles to Emmaus where He was seen by the two disciples
 - e. Walk back to Jerusalem where He was seen by the apostles

-- All within the same day!
2. Every effort was made to prove He was dead
 - a. The Roman soldiers at the cross pierced His side - **Jn 19:31-34**
 - 1) Out of which flowed blood and water
 - 2) An indication He was already dead, having died of a ruptured heart
 - b. Pilate made sure He was dead - **Mk 15:43-45**
 - 1) When Joseph of Arimathea wanted the body

- 2) The Roman centurion confirmed that Jesus was dead
3. Not only would this make the apostles liars and frauds, but Jesus also for allowing a lie to spread for years!

[Another popular alternative explanation is...]

IV. THE DISCIPLES HAD HALLUCINATIONS OR VISIONS

A. ELEMENTS OF THIS THEORY...

1. All of Christ's post-resurrection appearances were only supposed appearances
2. Those who claimed to see Jesus had hallucinations

B. PROBLEMS WITH THIS THEORY...

1. Remember that the appearances were not just to individuals, one at a time
 - a. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus claimed to see Him - **Lk 24:13-35**
 - b. Ten apostles claimed to see Him - **Jn 20:19-25**
 - c. He appeared to over 500 people at once - **1 Co 15:6**
2. The hallucination theory contradicts laws and principles which psychiatrists say are essential to hallucinations:
 - a. Only certain kinds of people have hallucinations
 - 1) These are usually high-strung, highly imaginative, and very nervous people
 - 2) Usually only paranoid or schizophrenic individuals have hallucinations
 - 3) The appearances were not restricted to people of any particular psychological make up
 - b. Hallucinations are linked in an individual's subconscious
 - 1) An individual may have an hallucination
 - 2) But hallucinations do not appear to groups of people
 - c. They occur in people when there is a spirit of anticipation or hopeful expectation
 - 1) The disciples had no such anticipation - **Lk 24:13-21**
 - 2) They were prone to disbelieve even after they were told of the resurrection - **Jn 20:24-25**

[Then there is the theory that...]

V. SOMEONE IMPERSONATED JESUS

A. ELEMENTS OF THIS THEORY...

1. The appearances were not really Christ at all, but someone impersonating Him
2. This is evident because in some cases they did not recognize Him at first

B. PROBLEMS WITH THIS THEORY...

1. The disciples were reluctant to believe in the resurrection
 - a. Some were doubtful, such as Thomas - **Jn 20:24-25**
 - b. It would have been hard to convince them unless it was really Him
2. It would have been impossible to impersonate Christ's wounds
 - a. This was Christ's proof it was really Him - **Jn 20:26-27**
 - b. Which convinced doubting Thomas - **Jn 20:28-29**
3. The apostles traveled with Jesus for three years
 - a. It is incredible that anyone could have gotten away with an impersonation

- b. Which is why the apostles were witnesses of the resurrection - **Ac 10:39-41**
- 4. The one claiming to be the resurrected Jesus performed miracles
 - a. Suddenly appearing in locked rooms - **Jn 20:19**
 - b. Directing them how to catch fish - **Jn 21:1-7**

[Closely related to this would be the theory that...]

VI. SOMEONE WAS MISTAKEN FOR JESUS

A. ELEMENTS OF THIS THEORY...

- 1. The disciples simply mistook for Jesus someone who looked like Him
- 2. For example, the women mistook the gardener for Jesus - cf. **Jn 20:14-15**

B. PROBLEMS WITH THIS THEORY...

- 1. The same problems as with the impersonation theory
 - a. Disciples reluctant to believe in the resurrection
 - b. Impossible to recreate the wounds of Jesus
 - c. Ample time with Jesus to verify His identity
- 2. While Mary may have mistaken Jesus for the gardener, she was able to look through her grief and recognize who He was

[Finally, here is an alternative proposed by some theologians who just cannot accept the idea of a physical, bodily resurrection...]

VII. IT WAS ONLY A SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION

A. ELEMENTS OF THIS THEORY...

- 1. Christ's resurrection was not a real physical resurrection
- 2. Christ's body remained in the grave and His real resurrection was spiritual in nature
- 3. It was only told this way to illustrate the truth of spiritual resurrection

B. PROBLEMS WITH THIS THEORY...

- 1. If it was only a spiritual resurrection, what happened to the body?
 - a. The enemies of Christ were never able to produce a body
 - b. Which they would have gladly done to discredit the apostles
- 2. Again, the nature of the apostles' testimony is empirical: they ate and drank with Him, touched Him - **Lk 24:36-43; Ac 10:39-41; 1 Jn 1:1-2**
- 3. Paul argued a bodily resurrection of Jesus as evidence for our own bodily resurrection - **1 Co 15:12-58**

CONCLUSION

- 1. The resurrection of Jesus has been variously interpreted as...
 - a. A great hoax (the resurrection is **false**)
 - b. Mythology (the resurrection is **fiction**)
 - Therefore various alternatives have been proposed to explain the empty tomb
- 2. But there is only one interpretation worth accepting...
 - a. It is the supreme event of history (the resurrection is **fact**)

- b. Supported by empirical testimony provided by reliable witnesses
- c. With implications of great significance for both unbeliever and believer alike

When you consider the strength of the apostles' testimony, and contrast it with the weakness of the alternative explanations that have been proposed, it leads an honest person in only one direction: to faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God...

“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” (Jn 20:30-31)

Are you willing to believe in Jesus, that you might have life in His name? Then heed the words of the apostle Peter proclaimed in the first gospel sermon:

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” (Ac 2:36-39)

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:16-20

INTRODUCTION

1. The gospel of Matthew ends with Jesus meeting with His apostles in Galilee...
 - a. Foretold by Jesus before His betrayal - **Mt 26:31-32**
 - b. Announced by both an angel and Jesus after His resurrection - **Mt 28:7,10**
2. It was a meeting filled with mixed emotions - **Mt 28:16-17**
 - a. Seeing Jesus, they worshipped Him
 - b. Yet some were doubtful
 - 1) It is unlikely this refers to the apostles, for they had seen Jesus earlier - cf. **Jn 20:19-20, 24-29**
 - 2) This may have been the occasion where over 500 saw Him at once, and some may have wondered what they were seeing - cf. **1 Co 15:6**
3. It was a meeting in which Jesus gave His disciples a command - **Mt 28:18-20**
 - a. To make disciples of all the nations
 - b. Baptizing and teaching them
 - Ending with a promise to always be with them

[This command is commonly called “**The Great Commission**”. As we take a few moments to look at it more closely, we may better understand what was so “great” about it...]

I. GREAT IN ITS AUTHORITY

A. JESUS HAS BEEN GIVEN “ALL AUTHORITY”...

1. As the Creator, He had the original right to all things - **Co 1:16-17**
2. As our Redeemer, even more so! - **Ph 2:6-11**

B. “ALL AUTHORITY” BOTH IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH...

1. He now rules in the heavenly realm - **1 Pe 3:22; Ep 1:20-23**
2. He also rules over the kings of the earth! - **Re 1:5; Psa 2:1-12; 110:1-6**

C. WITH “ALL AUTHORITY” IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH...

1. Jesus certainly deserves our obedience to Him as Lord - **Ac 2:36; Lk 6:46**
2. Jesus certainly can deliver on His promises - **2 Pe 1:2-5**

[On the basis of such great authority, Jesus extends “**The Great Commission**”. As we continue, we notice that it is...]

II. GREAT IN ITS MISSION

A. THEY WERE TO “MAKE DISCIPLES”...

1. The KJV says “teach”, the Greek word means “to make disciples”
2. Thus they were to make “learners”, “adherents”, “imitators” of Jesus Christ

- a. Jesus had been inviting people to become His disciples - **Mt 4:18-22; 11:28-30**
- b. He expected His disciples to become like Him - **Lk 6:40**

B. HOW THEY WERE TO “MAKE DISCIPLES”...

1. First, by “baptizing them” in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 - a. A baptism for the remission of sins - **Ac 2:38; 22:16**
 - b. A baptism in water - **Ac 8:35-38; 10:47-48**
 - c. A burial - **Ro 6:3-6; Co 2:11-12**
 2. Then by “teaching them to observe all things” He had commanded
 - a. Baptism is only the beginning, teaching must continue
 - b. Such was the case with the early disciples - **Ac 2:41-42**
- Both baptism and ongoing teaching is essential to true discipleship!

[We should also observe concerning “**The Great Commission**” that it was...]

III. GREAT IN ITS SCOPE

A. IT IS FOR “ALL NATIONS”...

1. They were to go into all the world, and preach to every creature - **Mk 16:15**
2. They were to be witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth - **Ac 1:8**

B. FOR “ALL NATIONS”, NOT JUST ISRAEL...

1. With the Limited Commission, it was just for Israel - **Mt 10:5-6**
2. Now the Gentiles (all nations) could become fellow-heirs - **Ep 2:11-22**

C. FOR “ALL NATIONS”, NOT JUST OUR OWN...

1. Jesus would have us think “globally”, not just locally
2. While we should be mindful of our local community, we should also be thinking of those abroad

[Finally, we note concerning “**The Great Commission**” that it is...]

IV. GREAT IN ITS PROMISE

A. “I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS”...

1. A promise similar to those Jesus made earlier:
 - a. To His apostles - **Mt 18:20**
 - b. To those who keep His commandments - **Jn 14:18-23**
2. A promise similar to those God gave to:
 - a. Moses - **Exo 3:11-12**
 - b. Joshua - **Josh 1:5**
 - c. The nation of Israel - **Isa 41:10**
3. A promise that ought to provide much comfort when oppressed - **Ro 8:31-38; He 13:5-6**

B. “EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE”...

1. Even to the time when:
 - a. The Great Harvest will occur - **Mt 13:39-43**
 - b. The wicked shall be separated from the just - **Mt 13:49**
2. Throughout this Christian age or dispensation, Jesus will forever be with His disciples

- a. As they go into all the world
- b. Making more disciples

CONCLUSION

1. Is **“The Great Commission”** limited just to the apostles...?
 - a. Note well that disciples were to “observe all things that I commanded you”
 - b. What did Jesus just command the apostles? (Go therefore and make disciples...)
 - c. Future disciples were to observe all commands, including this one!
 - **Therefore “The Great Commission” is a commission to the church as well!**

2. Do we honor **“The Great Commission”** in our lives...?
 - a. We do if we are submitting to the authority of Jesus
 - b. We do if we are working to make disciples of Jesus
 - c. We do if we are striving to make disciples in all the nations of the world
 - d. We do if we are abiding in His Word and thereby ensuring His abiding presence in our lives

Shortly after giving **“The Great Commission”**, Jesus ascended to heaven (**Ac 1:9-11**). His earliest disciples took that commission and did great things with it. May these words of Jesus motivate us to do great things in our service to Him also!