

The Gospel of Matthew

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Introduction to Matthew's Gospel

The four Gospels are neither histories of the life of Christ nor biographies. They are rather portraits of the person and work of the world's Savior. As portraits they present four different poses of one unique personality.

Matthew presents Him as King - Mark as Servant - Luke as Man - John as God. Ezekiel's vision. In this four dimensional view the Gospels focus on Christ's threefold ministry of Prophet, Priest and King.

As

Prophet He did not speak for God as other prophets. God spoke through Him as Son. The O.T. prophet was a voice for God. But Christ being God, was the voice of God Himself.

As

Priest Christ became both Sacrifice and Sacrificer. He died on the Cross to save sinners, and through His resurrection lives eternally to make intercession for them.

As

King He was rejected at His first advent, but at His second advent He will reign upon David's throne and of His kingdom there will be no end. Only in Matthew does Christ speak of

- the throne of His glory Matthew 19:28; 25:31.
- the holy city Matthew 4:5.
- city of the great King Matthew 5:35.

Christ's words in the four Gospels.

- In Matthew there are 644 verses of Christ's words.
- In Mark 285
- In Luke 586
- In John 419.

One other point of interest:

- Matthew was written to the Jew
- Mark to the Roman
- Luke to the Greek
- John to the Church

One of the purposes of Matthew's Gospel seems to be to act as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. He writes to show that the promised Messiah of the O.T. is the Jesus Christ of the N.T.

The Gospel of Matthew, accordingly, presents Christ's royal genealogy. His ancestry is traced back to King David.

Chapter 1. The early recognition that He was indeed the King of the Jews by the wise men is in keeping with Matthew's presentation.

Chapter 2. A king must be strong in character. His strength is shown in defeating Satan.

Chapter 4.

A king must have a kingdom - uniquely the "kingdom of heaven" is mentioned 30 times. The word "kingdom" is used more than 50 times. The term "kingdom of heaven" is used exclusively in Matthew.

A kingdom must have laws.

Chapters 5-7. The Sermon on the Mount stating the moral principles or laws is given more extensively in Matthew than in the other Gospels.

A king must have the power to implement His laws.

Chapters 8-10. Matthew continues to present the sayings of Christ and shows by the miracles performed, (power over disease - demons - death - the elements) that He had the power and had the credentials attributed to the Messiah of the O.T.

Matthew 11:28 "Come unto Me" etc.

By the time we reach

Chapter 12 the passive rejection of the Lord by the Jews is complete.

In

Chapter 13, in parabolic form, the Lord gives a description of events during the period between His two advents. The new form the kingdom will take.

Beginning at

Chapter 14, the opposition stiffens. John the Baptist is beheaded. The Lord openly, vehemently, denounces the unbelief and hypocrisy of the Jews.

Matthew 15:7-8. "Honor Me with your mouth. Heart far from Me." As the opposition increases the Lord announces His death.

Matthew 16:21.

At this point new evidence comes from God in heaven as to who Jesus really was.

Matthew 16:16. "Thou art the Christ" etc.

Then as every hope receded of establishing the kingdom at this time, Peter, James and John were given a revelation of who Jesus really was, and at the same time were given a preview of the future glorious kingdom.

Matthew 17:1-8. Transfiguration.

As Jesus presses towards Jerusalem He again predicts His death and resurrection.

Matthew 20:17-19.

In

Chapter 21 He publicly offers Himself as King. He was gladly received by the common people but utterly rejected by the religious leaders. "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

In

Chapter 22 our Lord denounces the Herodians, the Sadducees, the scribes and Pharisees.

In the following chapter Jesus completely abandons the nation. He pronounced seven woes on the hypocritical Pharisees. He wept over Jerusalem - declaring that their house was abandoned by God. This led our Lord, in Chapters 24 and 25, to take His disciples aside and in what is known as the Olivet discourse show them the events which would take place between the two advents, with special reference to the great tribulation, just preceding His second coming to the earth.

Chapters 26-27 describe the arrest, trial and death of the King. Matthew reminds us that His accusation was, "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews."

The King died "When He had cried with a loud voice, yielded up His spirit." The death of the King.

Chapter 28. The resurrection of the King, verse 2: "An angel descended - earthquake - He rolled the stone away - sat on it."

Finally the commission of the King: "Make disciples of all nations." "Baptize them who believe." "Teach them the whole truth."

The power of the King: "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and on earth."

The ever-abiding presence of the King: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. Amen."

Matthew 1

Matthew 1

Matthew is the Kingly Gospel. He writes principally to the Jews to show that the Jesus of Nazareth of the New Testament is the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament.

A king must be able to trace his royal ancestry. Matthew begins the New Testament by presenting the genealogy or family tree of Jesus the Christ. Read Verse 1.

He traces the legal descent of Jesus as King of Israel. Then uniquely Matthew follows the royal line from David, through his son Solomon. In doing this he establishes beyond doubt the claims of Christ to be King. Interestingly, there is a statement in Genesis 5:1 which is similar to the pronouncement of verse 1: "This is the book of the generations of Adam."

The two statements are descriptive of the two great themes of Scripture. The O.T. is devoted to the record of Adam and his descendants. The N.T. gives the history of Christ, the Son of God, and His redeemed family.

To sum up, Matthew is presenting Jesus Christ as the Son of David - The Son of Abraham - the rightful King of the Jews. He also presents Him as Jesus - Jehovah Savior.

At this point we should notice verse 16. Casually reading this verse we might assume the word "whom" refer back to Joseph and Mary, and that Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary. How carefully the Spirit has guarded against such a conclusion. The word "whom" is in the singular

feminine gender. Praise God, Jesus was born of Mary, but not of Joseph.

The second portion of the chapter contains the story of the miraculous conception and birth of the King.

Verse 18: "Now the birth of Christ was in this way." Note how different the birth of Jesus was to the others mentioned. His birth was without the involvement of a human father.

Mary was espoused or betrothed to Joseph. This was much more binding than the present day engagement. The man who betrothed a young woman was legally her husband. So then Mary was Joseph's wife legally.

During this betrothal time, the virgin Mary became pregnant, by a miracle of the Holy Spirit. When Joseph found that Mary was pregnant, he was very perturbed. He wondered if his legal wife had been unfaithful to him. The people wondered if Joseph was immoral. Disgrace - divorce - death were imminent.

Verse 19: Being a gentle man, and loving Mary, he decided to quietly divorce her.

Verse 20: As he was contemplating his course of action an angel appeared to him. He urged him to take Mary to be his wife. He then explained the miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 21: The angel also revealed the unborn child's sex, name and mission. He was to be called "Jesus" - because "He will save His people" etc.

Verse 23: Also mentions that His name will also be "Emmanuel," which means "God with us." This incomparable child - born of a human mother, was the eternal God dwelling with mankind.

Verse 24: Joseph was wakened from his sleep - he abandoned his plan to divorce Mary. He took unto him his wife, as the angel had commanded and knew her not until after Jesus was born. Then he lived with her as husband and wife. Mary had other children. See Matt 12:46; 13:55. Acts 1:13-14.

Thus the Messiah King was born. The heavens were filled with the glory of God. The angels were busy singing God's praises. Never had there been such angelic activity.

The eternal One entered into time. The everlasting God became the Babe of time.

The Father of eternity became the Babe of Bethlehem.

The Omnipotent became a tiny infant.

The Lord of glory veiled that glory in a human body.

Uniquely, in Him dwelt all the fullness of the godhead bodily.

The Sermon on the Mount

Studies in the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5-7

It is no accident that this sermon of Jesus is placed so near the beginning of the New Testament. Its position indicates its importance. It contains a comprehensive statement of the principles relating to the kingdom which the Lord Jesus proclaimed. The message that He proclaimed was never intended to be a presentation of the Gospel, or the plan of salvation.

Illustration of the dying man.

It was addressed to His disciples, Matthew 5:1 and to "the people" Matthew 7:28.

The ethics expressed have application to all who acknowledge Christ as King, past, present, and future. They had a direct application to the Lord's disciples. They have an application to us in this age. Finally, they will be the code of behavior for Christ's followers during the tribulation, and the Millennium.

If the aforementioned statements are correct, a study of this sermon will yield its treasures to those who analyze each text, who determine its general meaning - its present application - and its relation to the future kingdom.

Matthew's theme is the King and His Kingdom.

Consider Luke's account of the birth of Christ. Describe Matthew's account.

The "Kingdom of Heaven" is mentioned 32 times in Matthew's Gospel, and is found nowhere else in the New Testament. It is always the "Kingdom of God."

Matthew presents the birth of the King in Matthew 2. Worship of the King. In Chapter 4 he presents the character, integrity, and victory of the King. In Chapter 8 the power of the King. Disease - demons - elements - death. A King must have a Kingdom, and laws to govern it. Chapters 5-7 show the Presentation of these laws.

The strict interpretation of this sermon is that it applies to a future age - the Millennium. However there is an application to the present age.

The keenest minds have recognized in this portion the highest ethical teaching ever given to men. The Sermon on the Mount was our Lord's exposition of the holiness of God. In it the Lord described the characteristics of a righteous man. He laid the foundation for a happy life. He showed what would characterize a true believer.

Now we come to the Beatitudes themselves.

The Lord begins His message with the lofty and incomparable nine "Blesseds".

The number is suggestive. It is composed of three times three. Three is the number of the Godhead.

Three times three, suggests that the fullness of the Godhead is revealed here. Compare the fruit of the Spirit.

Verse 3 opens with "Blessed".

The word implies divine joy - perfect happiness - and heavenly peace. It also implies an inner satisfaction and sufficiency that does not depend on external circumstances. See Phil 4, "Be anxious for nothing" etc. The word "Blessed" is used frequently in the New Testament to describe the condition of those whom God blesses. God alone is worthy to be blessed. Eph. 1-3 He

is worthy to receive blessing because of His absolute, unalterable holiness.

John 13:17 "If you know these things HAPPY are ye if you do them." Happiness depends on knowing the truth, and obeying it.

John 20:29 The Lord said to Thomas, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed, BLESSED are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." They who truly believe are happy people.

Titus 2:13 Looking for that BLESSED hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

This happiness is related to holiness. In the N.T. happiness is identified with pureness of character. The Word sees sin as the fountainhead of misery. It sees holiness as the source of peace and satisfaction and contentment, these are included in the word "happy" or "blessed."

"Blessed are the poor in Spirit."

This condition of being "poor in spirit" is not a person's natural disposition, but is the result of a deliberate choice, and severe discipline. Those "poor in spirit" confess their weakness, and helplessness, and rely on the exhaustless riches of God's grace. Examples: The Lord Philippians 2; Paul 1 Thess 2:4-11. See also 2 Corinthians 10:1. Meekness and quietness of Christ. Those who are "poor in spirit" will experience the blessings of the kingdom in which self-sufficiency is not a virtue, and self-exaltation is a vice.

1 Samuel 2:8 Hannah said, "He raiseth up the poor in spirit out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the

dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory."

Matt. 18:3-4 "He that humbles himself, and becomes as a little child - this is what being "poor in spirit" means - shall be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Humility is an emptying of oneself. There must be an emptying before there can be a filling. All this is the opposite of self-aggressiveness which is so prevalent in the world today. Those poor in spirit will obtain perfect happiness and experience the blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven.

See Luke 16:19-22

The word "beggar", mentioned twice, is the same word as Matthew uses for "poor." Lazarus was a believer - he had no social standing - he had no human resources. He was wholly cast upon the mercy of God. Result! Being poor in spirit is the opposite of being proud.

The poor in spirit is the one from whom the ground of self-sufficiency has been to. The poor in spirit is the heart on its knees. It is one who has an attitude of utter dependence on God.

When the Lord spoke to His hearers concerning the way of access to Him, He told them a story in Luke 18:9-14. How not to approach Him: the way of the Pharisee. He commended himself for what he was, "I am not as other men." Extortioness - unjust - adulteress - nor am I like this tax collector. Then he commended himself for what he had done. "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Describe this Pharisee.

The way of approach to God is the way the tax collector took. He stood afar off and with downcast eyes

confessed that he was a sinner and cried out from the depth of his poor spirit, "God be merciful to me a sinner." God look upon me as You look upon the Mercy Seat sprinkled with atoning blood. This man claimed nothing of his own and cast himself on the grace and mercy of God. This was a man poor in spirit - he went down to his house justified.

The happiness - joy - peace filled his life. The Pharisee did not experience this joy.

Read at this point Psalm 5:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Thou dost not desire sacrifices, neither do You want burnt offerings.

Isaiah 66:1-2

Thus saith the Lord: "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool I inhabit eternity. "Where is the house you can build unto Me?" "Where is the place that I may rest?" There is nowhere physically adequate on earth for God to dwell. "But God will dwell with the brother or sister of a contrite heart, and who trembleth at My Word."

Verse 4: "Blessed are they who mourn; for they shall be comforted." Firstly, there is the mourning which everyone experiences sooner or later. This kind of mourning can become the means of our growth in grace. Heb 12:11. Especially when we know the God of all comfort. 2 Cor 1:3. And also the One who binds up the broken hearted.

This is not the kind of mourning referred to here. This is rather mourning with the Son of man. Seeing through

His eyes. And feeling through His heart. This is the mourning that one experiences while walking in fellowship with Christ. To this kind of mourner the Lord has promised to give comfort and will give beauty for ashes. "The oil of joy for mourning." "The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Isa 61:3.

Psalm 34:18

"The Lord is near unto those who are of a broken heart, and will comfort and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

This mourning is weeping over the sins of the world, my sins. Weeping over the appalling conditions of the world.

Weeping over man's rejection of the Savior. Weeping over the terrible doom of the Christ rejecter. See Jeremiah 9:1 "O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears."

The spiritual fathers among us should be sober, grave, and temperate. John Knox - Rachel - General Booth.

They should be sorrowful, but not miserable.

They should be serious, but not solemn.

They should be sober-minded, but not sullen.

They should be grave, but not prohibitive.

Though serious, they should be possessed with a warmth that draws others to them. Peter's tears, Luke 22. Comfort.

As we seek to reach the lost with the Gospel, we should mourn in spirit. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy"

"We should go forth weeping, bearing precious seed."

Ps. 126

Jesus wept over Jerusalem.

Note the tears of devotion. Luke 37:39. The woman in the Pharisee's house.

We never read of Jesus laughing.

"Jesus wept." He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Even though "He came to His own things, His own people would not receive Him." Tears are not a sign of weakness, but of depth of feeling.

In His mourning none was comforted more than He. There were three messages from heaven.

An angel comforted Him in Gethsemane.

Those that mourn with, and because of, Christ shall be comforted. It is paradoxical, that those who mourn, sorrow or grieve, are amongst the happiest people on earth. They have divine joy, perfect happiness, and heavenly peace.

See Psalm 84:5-7, 10.

We should mourn over our own sin. Unconfessed sin. Consider David's remorse in Psalm 32. Verse 3-4 describe the agonies David endured during a period of conviction for his sin. He became physically and mentally wearied, as God's heavy hand pressed upon him. There was a "roaring". His sweat was so profuse that his body was dehydrated. "Sela"- pause and consider. Note now in verses 1-2 the happiness of the man who has no unconfessed sin in his life. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered."

Paul said, "In me dwelleth no good thing" "for the good that I would do I do not" "Who shall deliver me from this

vile body of death?" "O wretched man that I am" etc. Those who live in this attitude will be filled with divine joy, and will experience the incomparable comfort of God.

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

The world admires the aggressive, self-assertive man. It is the exact opposite in Christ's Kingdom.

"Become a little child." Matt 18

"Become a servant." John 13. Humble - strength of spirit - strength that is under control.

Note the difference between meekness and weakness.

Both Moses and Jesus were meek men, but they were not weak. Moses was the meekest man in all the earth, but he was one of the strongest. When the Lords enemies said, "He hath a devil" - He meekly endured it. When they said, "Thou art a Samaritan" - He answered them not. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not." 1 Peter 2

This is the attitude that submits to God's dealings without rebellion, and to man's unkindness without retaliation.

Consider the Lord in Gethsemane

See the Lord's strength as He cleansed the temple.

See His meekness when He said, "Permit the children to come to Me."

Meekness is part of the fruit of the Spirit. Love - joy - peace - longsuffering - gentleness - goodness - faith - meekness - and self-control.

The word for "meekness" in the original, is the word that describes a stallion that has been broken, and has learned to accept control, and be responsive and obedient to its rider's slightest touch.

It works the same in a person. Even though by nature he might be volatile, temperamental and gruff, yet by deliberately choosing Christ's yoke and learning from Him, he becomes meek and lowly in heart, Matthew 11:29.

The sacrifice that the Lord appreciates, "is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart He will accept." Broken vessels. God can only use broken vessels. See Romans 12:1 - Present - and yield your body.

Jesus took the little lad's bread - and broke it - and fed the multitude.

Mary's alabaster box of ointment was broken - and its fragrance filled the house - and the world.

Jesus said, "This is My body, which is broken for you."

When it was broken it brought salvation to the world.

Gideon's broken vessels. Jacob - Paul - Isaiah - Mary - Jeremiah.

2 Corinthians 4:7

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels" - and when they are broken - "the excellency of the power of God is seen."

Peter urges us to be of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price. 1 Peter 3:4.

Meekness is that unique quality which patiently accepts insults, and injuries from others. The meek person is

gentle and mild in his own cause. He is unsparing in his efforts to defend others. This man is loved by the Lord and enjoys the inner satisfaction - perfect happiness - divine joy - and heavenly peace.

The meek do not inherit the earth at the present time. They rather inherit the world's abuse and dispossession.

There is a future day when they will inherit the earth, when Christ the King reigns for a thousand years of peace and prosperity.

"Blessed are the meek."

The world does not see as God sees nor does it think as God thinks. What is precious in God's sight is often despicable to the world. There is no place where this is more clearly seen than in Matthew 5:5. What God counts as the basis of blessing, the world utterly despises. The world equates meekness with an effeminate man, a weakling, a pushover. The Lord's view of meekness is entirely different from that of the world.

Moses

Numbers 12:3: "The man Moses was very meek, above all the men on the face of the earth."

When Moses was commissioned by God to bring forth the children of Israel from Egypt, note his response.

Exodus 3: "Who am I?" Total inadequacy.

Exodus 4:10: I am not eloquent - I am slow of speech - and of a slow tongue.

This is the meekness God was looking for, one with no confidence in himself.

As Moses was confessing his inadequacy God said to him, "What is that in thy hand?" It was the rod he used while keeping the sheep. It became the "Rod of God."

God does not associate meekness with weakness, but rather with fearless boldness. Note Moses's return to Pharaoh, the mightiest monarch in the world, not with a request but with a command, "Let my people go" Ex 5:1.

Describe also his coming down from the mountain - the incident of the golden calf.

The Lord in Gethsemane showed His meekness.

As He anticipated being made sin and being separated from God, He sweat as it were great drops of blood. He said to the Father, "Not my will but Thine be done." "I come to do Thy will, O God." This gentleness and meekness of Christ was not timidity, nor cowardice, but a complete dependence on the Father.

The signs of a meek person are:

(1) He recognizes constituted authority, and submits to it, 1 Peter 2 (2) He is subject to the authority of the employer, 1 Peter 2:18,19 (3) He is subject to the authority of the home, 1 Peter 3:1 (4) He is subject to the authority of godly elders, 1 Peter 5:5

"Happy are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."

James 5

"He who converteth one from the error of his ways covers a multitude of sins."

Proverbs 12:20

"To the counselors of peace there is joy."

The natural thing is to watch strife from the sidelines. Even on occasion to gloat over the plight of the participants.

The divine approach for the spiritual is to take positive action toward the cessation of hostilities, and the restoration of peace.

Strife and division are the works of the flesh. Gal 5:19

Sowing discord among brethren is one of the things God hates. Pro 6:14.

Troublemakers will suffer fearful loss at the Judgment Seat.

Peacemakers will be rewarded.

The Scripture enjoins us to:

"Follow after the things that make for peace." Rom 14:19.

"Follow peace with all men." 2 Tim 2:22.

"As much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men." Rom 12:18.

"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Eph 4:3.

Those who do this shall be called the "sons of God."

This is not how we become the sons of God.

This can only happen by receiving Christ as Savior.

As peacemakers go about their task of peacemaking - they act like and reveal themselves to be the sons of God.

For this type of conduct, God will proudly acknowledge such, as His sons, who bear the family likeness.

Verse 10: "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Please note that this is not suffering for one's own sin. This is suffering for righteousness sake and would include suffering for the truth. These are believers that suffer for doing the right thing because of their new life in Christ. They suffer for their uprightness.

Examples of this--

Gus De Renzo - Bill Threlkold - Bermudians - Jay.

Samuel Rutherford.

Such unshakable integrity condemns the ungodly and brings out their venomous hostility.

Hebrews 11 is an example of this.

For their faith in God, and their righteous life, many of the Old Testament saints were persecuted beyond the limits of human endurance. Jeremiah Future of assemblies.

They were tortured - mocked and scourged - imprisoned - stoned - and sawn asunder - slain with the sword - wandered in sheepskins and goatskins - were destitute - afflicted and tormented.

They wandered in deserts - on mountains - in dens and caves. The world treated them as the worst of criminals, and disposed of them in horrendous ways.

There were others in that illustrious group who endured the wrath of men, and triumphed over them in the name and power of God.

Among those who triumphed were those who "quenched the violence of fire, and who stopped the mouths of lions."

For refusing to worship the golden image, and obeying the injunction of Holy Writ, the three Hebrew children were cast into the furnace, heated to seven times its normal heat.

Even though they were bound, and fully clothed, the only things that were burned were the ropes that bound them.

Amidst their trial they were most blessed - they were filled with divine joy - perfect happiness and heavenly peace, because the Son of God supported, and delivered them.

Moreover, for their faithfulness to God they were promoted by the King. See Isaiah 43:2. The two on the way to Emmaus: "Jesus Himself drew near."

Daniel was released and his accusers were eaten by the lions.

For his faithfulness to God - God promoted him.

He was next in power to the king himself.

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

This final Beatitude seems to be a repetition of the preceding one. But there is a difference. In the previous verse it was persecution for righteousness sake. In this verse it is persecution for Christ's sake. The Lord knew that His disciples would be persecuted because of their

association with Him. They would be reviled, slandered, for their loyalty to Him.

History has confirmed this.

"You shall be My witnesses" - Five martyrs in Ecuador.

From the beginning of the Church, the world has harassed, persecuted, jailed, and killed members of the little flock.

Paul suffered tremendously throughout his life, and was abandoned by most of his brethren during his latter days.

2 Tim 4:16,17.

"Everybody forsook him." Despite this, he testified to the fact that "the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me." "I have fought a good fight" etc. As at no other time he realized divine joy - perfect happiness - and heavenly peace.

Each of the apostles knew of the heavy hand of persecution and martyrdom.

History tells us that Matthew was slain by the sword.

James was beheaded.

James the less, was thrown from a pinnacle of the temple, and then beaten to death.

Philip was hanged against a pillar at Hieropolis.

Bartholomew was flayed alive.

Andrew and Zelotes were crucified.

Thomas was run through with a spear.

Thaddeus was shot to death with arrows.

Peter was crucified upside down.

John was in exile on lonely Patmos.

Stephen was another example of being persecuted for Christ's sake.

James the Lord's brother, wrote to the strangers scattered abroad, because of persecution.

The early church were also persecuted.

"They that live godly shall suffer persecution."

Verse 12

To suffer for Christ is a privilege that should cause joy and gladness. A great reward awaits those who become companions of the prophets in persecution. These godly men stood firm for God, despite the most staggering suffering. All those who imitate their loyalty and courage for Christ will share their future exaltation. If we suffer we shall reign with Him.

In the Beatitudes we have a full length portrait of the ideal citizen of Christ's kingdom.

Notice the emphasis on "righteousness" in verse 6.

On "peace" in verse 9.

On "joy" in V12.

Compare this with Romans 14:17.

The kingdom of God does not mean food or drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Our attitude to our persecutors. Ch 5:44.

Parable of the two builders. Ch 7:24, 27.

2 Corinthians 4:17

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment,
worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight
of glory."

Some of the teaching of Christ given in His Sermon
Chapters 5-7

The nine "blesseds" called the Beatitudes.

Then the "Similitudes" Salt and Light.

Living at peace with our brethren.

Purity of thought and life.

Loving our enemies.

Ostentatious, hypocritical religious piety.

Good solid prayer life (twice).

Our treasure should be in heaven.

Complete dependence on God for all of our need.

God must be first in our life.

There must be no unjust criticism.

We must do to others what we would have them do to
us.

We must enter and walk the narrow way, that leads to
abundant life.

We must test and reject false teachers.

We must own the Lordship of Christ and obey Him at all
times.

Matthew 6

Some thoughts on Matthew 6:25-34

Chapters 5-7 give us the laws of the Kingdom. Primarily, they were intended to govern the kingdom which Christ could have established. They will yet be used in the future kingdom.

This is the strict interpretation of the chapters. However, the truths can be applied to us today.

Ch 6 covers some important areas of our life:

Verses 1-4 speak of our giving - In secret - Widow

Verses 5-15 speak of our praying. See verse 6. Elijah - son. Elisha - oil.

Verses 16-18 speak of our fasting.

Verses 19-24 speak of our use of wealth.

Some men spend their life, and ruin their soul, in the quest for wealth. Some believers, like Esau, have lost their spiritual heritage, and Gods blessing, because of their love of riches. Love of money.

It is not wrong to possess things, but it is very wrong for things to possess you. See Colossians 3: 1-2

The exhortations from verse 25 onward are not for the rich only, but include the poor. The sin mentioned here is not confined to worldlings - it is prevalent among believers. The sin of worry. Take no thought - be not anxious - do not worry.

Worry denies the love of God by implying He doesn't care for us. It denies the wisdom of God by implying that

He doesn't know what He is doing. It denies the power of God by implying that He isn't able to provide for us.

(1) Context of the Tribulation

Verses 25-26 should put the worrying saint at rest. Don't worry about food, drink or clothes. God feeds the birds, and we are of more value than they. I have never seen the righteous forsaken.

One important observation: Before the birds are satisfied they must look around, scratch and forage. In other words they must work to provide for themselves and family.

So must we human beings - we must work - the Scriptures say, "If a man will not work, let him not eat." 2 Thess 3:10.

(2) Verse 27

The exhortation here is that it is not only dishonoring to God to worry about the future, it is irrational and futile. No one by worrying can add 18 inches to his height. Some versions read can add one cubit to the span of his life. That is, a dying person cannot add eighteen minutes to his life by being anxious about it. Luke's comment on this is "If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest. $\frac{1}{2}$ " Luke 12:25-26 (3) In verses 28-30 the Lord goes into the realm of clothing. He says, "Why do you worry about clothes?" Consider the lilies, etc. They send their little roots and tendrils into the earth and God takes the substance they gather and transform it into a thing of beauty.

Solomon in his royal robes was not as beautiful as a lily. "If God so clothes the flowers, shall He not much more clothe you?"

"O ye of little faith." "Be not faithless but believing."

(4) Verses 31-32 Therefore be not anxious - do not worry about the future. God will supply all your needs - food, drink and clothing. See Phil 4:6,7 also verse 19 - Psalm 23. Do not be like the Gentiles who sometimes ruin their lives seeking earthly security. Remember that if we do our part, God will do His.

In verse 33 the Lord makes an important covenant with His followers. "If you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, I will see that you never lack the necessities of life. If you put God's interests first in your life, He will guarantee your future needs." God's provisions for Elijah at Cherith - His provision for the widow at Zarephath. 1 Kings 17. Make me a cake first. This is God's Social Security Plan. The formula: "Put Me and My interests first and you will never lack."

(5) Verse 34 - Therefore do not worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow is in God's hand; He will take care of it.

Sufficient unto the day is its own trouble - misfortune - adversity. Live for today and leave tomorrow in God's hands.

Matthew 7

Generally speaking the Sermon on the Mount covers three distinct areas of the believers life.

- (1) In chapter 5 we have the believers relation to the world.
- (2) In chapter 6 we have the believers relation towards God.
- (3) In chapter 7 we have the believers relation towards his fellow believers.

Campbell Morgan calls chapter 7 “a summary of principles of action.”

This chapter opens by forbidding hypocritical judgment of others. There seems to be a connection between the opening salvos and the Lord’s provocative teaching about earthly riches. The poor may have been critical and censorious of the rich. Conversely, the rich may have been wrongly judging the poor.

Verse 1, “Judge not, that ye be not judged”

There are some areas of the Christian life where it is improper to judge another.

- (1) We should not judge another’s motives. Only God can read them.
- (2) We should not judge outward appearances, John 7:24.
- (3) We should not judge those with conscientious scruples, Rom 4:3-13.

(4) We should not judge the service of another Christian, 1 Cor 4:1-5.

We must avoid the sin of continually finding fault - being harsh - critical - censorious. When we are tempted to judge any of these things, we should remember Rom 14:10. But why dost thou judge thy brother? For we as well as he will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

While the foregoing may be true there are areas in which Christians are commanded to judge.

(1) When disputes arise between believers, they should be judged and settled in the church and not in the civil court, 1 Cor 6:1-8.

(2) The local church is required to judge certain sins and ex-communicate the guilty person, 1 Cor 5:9-13.

(3) Believers must judge the spirits - preachers, doctrine and teachers - to see if they are of God, see 1 John 4:1; Matt 7:15-20.

(4) In respect of recognition of elders and deacons, those in the local church must judge their qualifications, 1 Timothy 3.

(5) In the case of matrimony we must judge whether people are born again, 2 Cor 6:4.

When the Lord Jesus said, "Judge not lest ye be judged" He did not mean for us to abandon Scriptural forms of judgment. When these judgments take place, the charges must be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses, Matt 18:16. Furthermore, only the spiritual person should stand in judgment over others, Galatians 6:1.

Verse 2, unjust judgment is like a boomerang.

“What we sow, that shall we reap.” Gal 6. The principle of reaping what we sow is woven into our life and affairs.

(1) In Mark 4:24 the principle is applied to our appropriation of the Word.

(2) In Luke 6:38 the principle is applied to our giving.

Verse 3-5, these verses teach us that before we dare judge, or criticize another, we should make certain that we have remedied our own faults.

Verse 6, a clear cut case of divine authorization of judgment. Under the Mosaic Law dogs and swine were unclean animals. In this context they represent unscrupulous and wicked men.

While we are obligated to share the Gospel with all men, there are times, when we must make a judgment not to share the message with some of them any more, because of their utter contempt of Christ and His claims. To press the Gospel on such brings needless harm to ourselves and increased condemnation to the offenders.

The Lord says that these contemptuous men “trample the truth under their feet.” The writer to the Hebrews says: “They tread the Son of God underfoot. They count the blood of Christ an unholy thing. They insult the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of grace.”

In verse 7 we have degrees of earnestness in prayer. In verse 8 we have the corresponding blessings resulting from our earnestness.

Asking can be done walking, sitting or lying down.

Seeking suggests effort, expended energy and going forth.

Knocking brings the praying one right to God's door.

Keeping these verses in strict context they mean, that those who would wish to exhibit the spirit and supernatural qualities of the Sermon on the Mount, they may do so by asking, by seeking and by knocking.

According to verse 8 this is a prayer that without doubt, shall be answered.

Those that ask receive;

Those that seek find;

Those that knock on the door it shall be opened to them.

This confidence and assurance is based on the character of God our Father.

Verses 9-11: On the human level, we know that if a father is asked by his son for bread, he will not give him a stone. No earthly father would give his child a serpent if he were asked for fish.

It is unthinkable that an earthly father would deceive or cause pain to his son. So then, "how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask Him."

In the parallel passage in Luke 11:13 Jesus said, "how much more will our Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him."

In one sense, this promise was fulfilled at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given. All believers are now indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

But there is a sense in which we need to pray for the fullness and power of the Spirit, to live with Christ, to live like Christ, to live for Christ.

Exhortation.

These verses are taken out of context by many and used to infer that they will get anything they ask. They assume that this is a blank check. This is far from the truth. They must be understood in the light of all the other verses in the Bible dealing with prayer.

For instance:

(1) The person praying must have no unconfessed sin in his life, Psalm 66:18.

(2) He must pray in faith, James 1:6-8; Heb 11:6.
“Without faith it is impossible.”

(3) He must pray according to the will of God, 1 John 5:14-15; James 5.

(4) He must pray sincerely, Heb 10:22.

(5) He must persevere in prayer, Luke 11:5-10 and 18:1-8. Andrew Born.

(6) All prayer must be for glory of God, John 14:13-14.
“That the Father in heaven be glorified.”

Finally, before John 15:7 can become a reality: “Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” Certain conditions have to be fulfilled.

There is the purging or the cleansing of verse 2.

There is the obedience of verse 10.

There is the abiding of verse 4.

When these conditions are met we can expect answers from heaven.

Verse 12. The Golden Rule.

“Whatever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” This is probably one of the most life transforming verses in the Bible. If it were obeyed worldwide, there would be an immediate lessening of international tension. Husbands and wives would be reunited. Parents and children would live happily together. Church differences would be settled and would cease to exist.

In the immediate context the meaning seems to be: Our Father is the Giver of good things to others. The Lord says that in living the “Golden Rule” we express the moral teachings of the law and the prophets.

Love is the greatest of all forces. Example - God’s love, Eph 4:32. In the human realm it is equally powerful.

The Lord said that if we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and if we love our neighbor as ourselves, we keep the two greatest commandments. Paul says that we fulfill the law, Gal 5:14, Matt 5:44.

Verses 13-14 Two Ways Contrasted

In verses 13-14 where we have two ways contrasted. I would like to consider them first in their interpretation and, secondly, in their application.

Interpretation

The gate of Christian discipleship

In presenting His challenge of discipleship the Lord says that the gate of true discipleship is narrow, and the way is hard, Matt 10:38-39. But those who abandon the self-life and faithfully follow the Lord’s teachings find the

“abundant life” verse 14. Isaiah - The Lord - Paul - 1 John 10; John 7; Psalm 1.

The wide gate and the easy way - the effortless way - the selfish way - the flesh gratifying way - the way of pleasure - lukewarm way. The end of such a life leads to spiritual disaster. Matt 10:33.

Explain the difference between being a believer and a disciple, or follower. In the matter of discipleship the above is very true, Matt 10:37. There are only a few who enter the narrow gate of discipleship in deepest consecration and self-denial, Rom 12:1-2. While on the other hand, the many or the majority, drift through the broad gate into a life of comfort and self-pleasing.

The challenge to us is, What gate have you entered through? On which way are you traveling?

Gospel application - the two roads and the two destinies of the human race. The wide gate and the broad road leads to the eternal abyss of hell. Many find this gate and many travel this broad road, with its pleasures, to destruction. The narrow gate and the narrow way which leads to heaven. Relatively few find the narrow gate and walk the narrow way.

Verses 15-20, False and True teachers

Wherever a clear and challenging presentation of true discipleship is made, there will always be those who advocate the wide gate and the easy way. They dilute the claims of Christ-they water down the demands of the Word. Outwardly, these false teachers appear real, but beneath the façade there is a wolf's nature. This is their true Personality - their purpose is to lead believers astray - their prey is the weak, immature and unstable.

Verse 16 Watch such closely. They will show their real character, in that they bear no fruit. Thorns and thistles they are, reminding us of God's curse upon the earth. They cannot bear grapes and figs - good food for man's nourishment.

Good trees bring forth good fruit - corrupt trees corrupt fruit.

Verse 20, The life and teaching of those who claim to be the mouthpiece of God should be tested by the Word of God. "To the law and the testimony" says Isa 8:20. Thus "by their fruits you shall know them."

Verses 21-23, False professors

These are searching verses - they should drive us to our knees. It is not enough to acknowledge Jesus as Lord with our lips. Mere profession is not enough. "Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" --- the true kingdom.

Professors are in the kingdom, as man sees it.
Professing kingdom.

Only those who acknowledge Christ as Savior and Lord, and who do God's will are in the true kingdom --- which is the Church, verse 21.

Verse 22 raises an interesting thought: In the day of judgment many professors will plead, that in the name of Jesus, they have prophesied - cast out demons - and performed miracles.

Their pleading or protestations will be in vain. "I never knew you; depart from Me ye workers of iniquity."

We learn from this verse that not all miracles are from God. Not all miracle-workers are God's children. A

miracle is a supernatural power at work. Judas; Ten Virgins. That power can be divine or satanic.

Verses 24-27, The wise and foolish builders The Lord Jesus closes His Sermon with a parable that drives home the importance of obedience. We must not only be hearers of the Word, but doers.

The wise man - describe how he built his house; it stood the test, because it was built on a rock. The rock is the teaching of Christ in the Sermon. He who hears these teachings and practices them, in his life, is the wise man. Because, when trouble and testings come from every direction he is able to stand, because he is firmly grounded in the Word.

The foolish man, on the other hand, is the one who hears the Word, but does not obey or practice it. When the storms of adversity come and the severe stresses of life avail, he collapses. His life is wasted; His testimony ruined, because he had built on sand instead of the rock.

Note at this point God's standards:

Those who live by the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls him a wise man.

Those who do not live by these principles, but live for themselves, Jesus calls them foolish.

There is also a very fine Gospel application in these verses.

Verses 28-29, The effect of the sermon on those who heard it.

"The people were astonished at His teaching."

Frankly, I am also astonished at the contents of this address of our Lord. If lived out in our lives, its revolutionary character would amaze us.

To those who heard this address it was different. It was not like the usual, boring and powerless talks of the scribes. It was different in that the Lord stood before them as having divine authority as the Expounder and Judge of such profound truths.

“What manner of man is this?” On a subsequent occasion the people said, “Never a man spoke like this man.”

Beloved, Jesus did not speak from human authorities as did the scribes. He spoke with all the authority of heaven and as the Son of God. He has spoken to us here. We cannot lightly dismiss this sermon, for it came from God. We must either bow before Him and submit to His authority, or stand condemned in the blaze of His glory.

“And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings.”

There are five groups of sayings, or bodies of teaching, in this Gospel. Each is concluded by similar words to those that close this Sermon. In each section He is portrayed in a unique character.

Matthew 8

Chapter 8 begins the third section of the book.

In the first section Chs. 1-4 to verse 11, the King is introduced. His Genealogy - Birth and early Life are described.

The second section reveals the principles and laws with which He would govern the Kingdom - The Sermon on the Mount. Chs. 5-7.

The third section Ch. 8-12 reveal the power of the King to implement those laws and also tell us of the tragic rejection of the King.

The Gospel of Matthew is composed of five groups of "sayings," or bodies of truth. Each group is concluded by similar words to those that close the Sermon on the Mount. "When Jesus had ended these sayings." Ch 7:28. In His Sermon we have Christ as the TEACHER instructing His disciples.

The next time these words occur is in Ch. 11:1. In the body of truth before this Christ is revealed as MASTER instructing His servants.

The third mention Ch. 13:53 closes the group of parables of the Kingdom where Christ reveals Himself as the KING informing His subjects.

The fourth mention Ch. 19:1 concludes the discourse on the Church (16-18) and shows Christ as the HEAD addressing His members.

The last mention Ch. 26:1 follows our Lords discourse on the end times and sets forth Christ as JUDGE entering into account with His creatures.

An understanding of the break-up of the Book will help us to see more clearly the truths Jesus is teaching.

In the section now before us we see the power of the King and also the MASTER instructing His servants.

Isaiah wrote 800 years before Christ was born, that when the Messiah came He would Open the eyes of the blind.

Unstop the ears of the deaf.

Cause the lame man to leap like a hart.

And make the tongue of the dumb to sing. Isa 35:5-6.

Jesus fulfilled all these prophecies. There is absolutely no excuse for Israel not identifying Him.

Chapter 8 is a series of miracles which show Christ's absolute authority over disease - demons - and the elements.

The first miracle here is the cleansing of a leper. Verses 2-4. This leper - no doubt a Jew - came and knelt before the Lord and asked Him to heal him. Lepers were untouchables. They were a great danger to society. The disease made the person ceremonially unclean. They could not attend a place of worship.

Jesus touched this man V3 and said "be thou clean" and the leprosy vanished.

In verse 4 Jesus asked the leper to tell no man. There are six other instances of this. There were at least two reasons for this (1) He must go to the priest as the law directed.

(2) The people were looking for a Deliverance from the Roman yoke and would have made Jesus King, because of His supernatural powers.

The nation was not ready for this - they were still unrepentant - and Jesus must first go to the Cross.

Under the law of Moses the priest also served as a physician. When a leper was cured, he had to appear before the priest to be pronounced clean. Then he had to bring an offering. Lev 14:4-6.

It was rarely that a leper was ever cured. This priest should have been alerted, causing him to investigate further the possibility of the long promised Messiah being in their midst. None are so blind as they that will not see.

The lessons of the miracle are twofold.

(1) Jesus was showing that He had power to heal the nation of its leprosy.

(2) Leprosy is a type of sin - it is loathsome - destructive - easily transmitted - and was, humanly speaking, incurable. Only Christ can take away sin.

The Lord has just shown His power over leprosy and now shows His power over paralysis. verses 5-13. This Roman Army officer was a Gentile - no doubt a believer - in contrast to the unreceptiveness of the Jews, this man displayed faith that caused the Lord to marvel. Verse 10. He acknowledged Jesus as "Lord" and had faith to believe that He had the power to heal his servant.

When the Lord suggested that He would visit the sick young man, the centurion said, "That is not necessary...my home is not worthy of your

presence...just speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. Note verse 9.

Jesus marveled because he had not found so great faith, even in Israel, verse 10. There is only one other occasion that Jesus is said to have marveled. He marveled at the unbelief of the Jews. Mark 6:6.

This demonstration of faith led Him to point out, that in His coming kingdom Gentiles would come from all over the world and enjoy fellowship with the patriarchs. While the "sons of the kingdom" - Jews by birth - would be thrown into outer darkness where they will weep and gnash their teeth. Verses 11 and 12.

The awful truth of these verses is that many children privileged to be born and raised in Christian families will perish in hell because they reject Christ. While jungle savages and those brought up in heathen lands will enjoy the glories of heaven because they believed the Gospel message.

The climax of the story is contained in verse 13. The servant boy was healed. He was healed at the same time that Jesus spoke the word.

Verses 14-15 demonstrate the Lord's power over fever. Peter's mother-in-law was sick of a fever. As soon as He touched her hand, the fever left her immediately.

Usually fever leaves a person very weak for some time. But this woman rose up and served Him, this was an expression of her gratitude. We too should imitate her. Since He has done so much for us we should show our appreciation with renewed dedication and consecration.

Verse 16 In the evening of the same day - the Sabbath, see Mark 1:21-34, they brought the sick and demon

possessed to Him. He drove out the demons and healed the sick that the prophecy of Isaiah might be fulfilled (53:4). Verse 17. "He took our infirmities and bore our sins."

This verse is often used by faith healers to show that healing is in the atonement, and therefore physical healing is something the believers can claim.

There is no thought of the cross-work of Christ in this passage. The text refers to the Saviors earthly healing ministry.

Golbalcin has an interesting view on these four miracles

(1) The healing of the Jewish leper is Christ in His first advent ministering to His people Israel.

(2) The healing of the centurion servant represents the Gentile dispensation, with Jesus absent.

(3) The healing of Peter's mother-in-law depicts Christ's second advent, where He will enter into the house and restore relations with Israel and heal the sick daughter of Zion.

(4) Healing of demon possessed and sick speaks of the millennium when all the sick and demon possessed will be healed.

Matthew 10

The truths of this section would apply to God's servants during any period of Bible history.

Running alongside the truth of service and our relationship with Christ, there is the perplexing subject of suffering. Paul says, "I bear in my body the marks", etc.

Let us look first of all at verses 24-25, at the relationship between Christ and His servants:

1. They were disciples—He was their Teacher.
2. They were servants—He was their Lord.
3. They were members of the household—He was Master of the house.

The disciple follows the Teacher and is not superior to Him. The servant should not expect to be treated better than His Lord. If men called Christ "Beelzebub", we His servants can expect insults to be hurled at us.

Discipleship involves sharing Christ's rejection and suffering.

v. 26-27—Cast in the framework of service and the first of suffering with all the hazards and disappointments the Lord issues His great calls to "fear not." Do not be afraid of the secret and deceptive means of those who oppose the Gospel. It will all be made public sometime later.

v. 27—The duty of the disciple was to proclaim fearlessly, to all men, the Gospel they had been taught.

v. 28-29—"Fear not them who kill the body." "The Lord is my helper, therefore I will not fear", etc. Those who kill the body have no power over the soul.

We should fear God who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Physical death is not a great tragedy for a believer. "It is absent from the body, present with the Lord."

The worst that can happen to a child of God by man's instrumentality is really the best thing that could happen to him. So we are exhorted to "fear not them who kill the body."

v. 29—Note God's care for the sparrows.

v. 30—Note God's care for us.

v. 31—The third "fear not."

v. 32—In view of the foregoing Christ's disciples should openly and fearlessly confess Him before men, in return He will confess us before the Father.

v. 33—Those who deny the Lord, those who refuse to give themselves to Christ, these will the Lord disown before the Father.

v. 34-39—We must interpret verse 34 in its setting to understand it fully. There is a very real sense in which the Lord came to make peace. When He was born the angels announced, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of goodwill."

v. 35-36—The sense here is that when men and women became believers in Christ, their families would turn against them. This type of incident is happening over all the world today.

v. 37—The cost of discipleship. Christ must be supreme. Many good brethren and sisters are languishing in the sphere of mediocrity because they have failed this crucial test. The mission field is depleted, the home field is suffering because love for Christ has waned. “Those who fail are not worthy of Me.”

v. 38-39—There is another thing that is more apt to rob Christ of His rightful place than love for one’s family, it is love of one’s self.

Alongside the thought of loving one’s life, there is introduced the thought of one’s Cross. These are two conflicting principles. Keeping one’s life, avoiding responsibility and shirking the loss and pain of total commitment.

The Cross speaks of execution and death. It means crucifying the flesh, it means my whole being and life totally abandoned and submissive to Christ.

v. 39—The believer who loves his life and does everything to satisfy it; in the final analysis has wasted it. Those who crucify the flesh with its indulgences and spend their life in the service of Christ, will find life in all of its fullness.

v. 40—This is a tremendous verse. Those who receive a true servant of God receives Christ and also the Father.

v. 41—Those who receive a prophet, because he is a prophet, will receive a prophet’s reward. Those who receive a good man because he is good will receive the same reward as he.

v. 42—Those who show kindness, be it ever so small, to any of my servants it will be rewarded.

Matthew 12

In chapter 11 the Lord has been rejected by the nation.

His total rejection is summarized in the attitude of three of the prominent cities of Galilee. Chorazin – Bethsaida - Capernaum.

The Lord pronounced judgment upon them because of their rejection of Him. Interestingly, the destruction of Chorazin and Bethsaida is so complete that no trace of them can be found. Also, the location of Capernaum is uncertain.

Tiberius, one of the larger cities in Galilee, which was more receptive to Christ and therefore escaped His judgment, is still standing and enjoying a good measure of prosperity.

This should encourage us as it illustrates our Savior's omnipotence and omniscience and the unfailing reliability of the Scriptures.

The final rejection of Christ by the Pharisees caused them to observe the life of the Lord and His disciples more minutely to justify their position.

They found their opportunity when they saw the disciples violating the Sabbath verses 1 thru 8 of Chapter 12. And Jesus healing the man with the paralyzed hand on the Sabbath verses 9-13.

The Lord and His disciples were walking through the corn fields, to satisfy their hunger the disciples plucked some ears of corn. The Pharisees took this rather flimsy piece of evidence and accused the disciples of breaking the Sabbath.

The Lord immediately defended his disciples by presenting three arguments.

(1) David's experience, verses 3 and 4. 1 Samuel 21:1-6. David ate consecrated bread which was reserved for the priests alone. For this act David was not condemned by the nation, nor by God.

He and his men did this when he was rejected by them. If he had been given his rightful place as king and he and his men would not have had to eat the shewbread.

History was repeating itself - the Lord was rejected - the nation was again in sin. Therefore the actions of satisfying hunger was more important than observing a minor technicality.

(2) the second argument drew their attention to the conduct of the priests on the Sabbath. Their work in maintaining the sacrifices and other rituals made them to break the law. They were not censured for doing this.

(3) The Lord's third argument against their criticism, was His own Person. He declared Himself to be greater than the Temple. If He did not condemn them, why should the Pharisees be critical.

Verse 7. This verse is a quotation from Hosea 6:6. The Pharisees had never understood this verse which says in essence that God puts mercy before ritual.

Verse 8. Jesus declares Himself to be "Lord of the Sabbath." He instituted the law in the first place, and therefore could interpret its true meaning.

The Subject of the Sabbath Day and the first Day Note the contrast.

The Sabbath is the seventh day. Sunday is the first.

The Sabbath commemorates God's creation rest Sunday, Christ's resurrection.

The Sabbath commemorates a finished creation Sunday a finished redemption.

The Sabbath was a day of legal obligation Sunday is one of voluntary worship and service.

Jesus heals on the Sabbath Verses 9-14.

Luke tells us in Ch 6:6-7 of his Gospel that the Pharisees were watching the Lord closely so that they could condemn Him and justify their position.

See verse 10. Note the question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?"

The Savior answered by asking. See verse 11.

In verse 11 the Lord reminded their hyper-critics of how they and others pulled their sheep out of the pit on the Sabbath.

In verse 12 he reminds them that a man is of greater value than a sheep. If it is right to show mercy to an animal on the Sabbath, it is much more important to heal a man on the Sabbath.

Verse 13. Stretch forth thy hand, and as he stretched it forth it was healed.

Verse 14. This action infuriated the Pharisees, who had neither Scripture nor logic to refute this remarkable work of God. In their frustration they took counsel how they might destroy Him.

Others healed the same Sabbath Verse 15-21.

Verse 15. Not wishing to incite the Pharisees further, Jesus withdrew - but great multitudes followed Him and the Scriptures simply record, "He healed them all."

This gracious, quiet ministry is interpreted by Matthew as fulfilling Isa 42:1-3, which he quotes in full.

What is the message of these verses?

This gentle conqueror is none other than "Jehovah's chosen servant" Verse 18. He is also the "beloved one" in whom God was well pleased. Jehovah "put His Spirit upon Him" at His baptism. His ministry eventually would reach out from the confines of Israel "to the Gentiles." This would be all the more evident as Israel's rejection became more apparent.

Verses 19-20. These verses mean that the Lord would not act as a political rabble-rouser. He would not ride rough-shed over the poor or underprivileged to gain disciples. He would help and encourage the broken-hearted. If He found a spark of faith, He would quietly fan it to a flame.

His unobtrusive ministry would continue until justice was vindicated in victory. Verse 21. "And in His name shall the Gentiles trust." Praise God!

Verses 22-23 In these two verses we find that Jesus healed a blind and dumb demoniac. They were so impressed that they thought that this Jesus might be the Son of David, or the promised Messiah.

Verse 24 The Pharisees were enraged and countered by accusing Him of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons.

Verses 25-26 Jesus knew their thoughts and pointed out to them the illogic of their statement. Any kingdom - city

- or house that is divided against itself, is bound to collapse. So then if He by the power of Satan, was casting out Satan's demons, then Satan was working against himself. Such a situation was unthinkable.

In Verse 27 our Lord struck home forcibly. He reminded them that there were Pharisees who claimed to cast out demons. Now says Jesus, if you claim that I cast out demons by Beelzebub, then these Pharisees also cast out demons by Beelzebub.

His accusers could not escape the logic of Christ's argument. They realized also that their associates would condemn them for implying that they were the agents of Satan.

The truth to grasp here is that Jesus cast out these demons by the Holy Spirit of God. The Lord's entire life on earth was lived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

He was the Spirit-filled Messiah whom Isaiah had foretold. Ch 11:2; 42:1; 61:1-3.

Verse 28 Therefore He said to the Pharisees, "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God is here, with you."

The tragedy was that they could discern the face of the sky, but in their blindness they did not discern the Christ of God, nor the kingdom of God, presently in their midst.

Verse 29 Far from being Satan's servant, He was really Satan's Conqueror. He illustrates this truth from this verse. The strong man is Satan. His house is the sphere in which he holds sway. His goods are his demons.

Jesus is the One who binds the strong man, enters his house, and plunders his goods. The binding of Satan

takes place in stages. It began during our Lord's public ministry. Casting out demons - raising the dead. It was guaranteed by the death and resurrection of Christ. It will be true to a greater degree during the Millennium. Rev 20:2. Finally, it will be eternally true when Satan is cast into the lake of fire.

In verse 30 Jesus told the Pharisees that even with their superior theological knowledge, they were His enemies, and the servants of the devil.

Verses 31-32. The unpardonable sin. These verses contain one of the most crushing accusations ever hurled at the leaders of the nation. He accuses them of committing the unpardonable sin by blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

The unpardonable sin consisted in ascribing to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit. They called him Beelzebub - the prince of demons. This was the greatest of all sins. Our Lord said that there is no forgiveness for this sin, in this age, or in the millennium.

This sin cannot be committed in the dispensation of grace.

The unpardonable sin of today is to live and die without Christ.

Verse 33 The Lord in His grace makes a further appeal to them. A good tree brings forth good fruit - a bad tree produces bad fruit.

Had not the fruit of His ministry been good? He had healed the sick, given sight to the blind, caused the deaf to hear, made the dumb to talk, cast out demons and raised the dead. Could a corrupt tree brought forth such

good fruit? The answer to that question is an emphatic No.

Why then did they not believe? Why did they refuse to acknowledge Him?

Verse 34 The Lord gives the reason, "You are a brood of vipers" - poisonous snakes.

That accounted for their venomous words - their malice against the Son of God. A person's speech is an index of his character. Verse 36-37. A good man's speech reveals the treasures within him. An evil man's speech reveals the venom within him.

There is an exhortation here that we need to be reminded of. "We shall give account of our words in the day of judgment." For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ and give account of the deeds done in the body. 1 Corinthians 3-2; 1 Corinthians 5; Romans 14. Many will be revealed---many will suffer loss.

The sign of the prophet Jonah Verse 38-41

In spite of all the miracles which Jesus had performed, the Pharisees, in their unbelief, asked Him for another sign. (Spectacular).

They inferred that if He could prove Himself to be the Messiah in this way, they would believe.

The Lord, who knew the hearts of all men replied in a devastating manner. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." No sign would be given to it, but the sign of Jonah, the prophet.

He was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish and was disgorged alive onto dry land.

The Lord took this incident as prophetic, depicting His own experience in death-burial-and resurrection. No other sign would be given.

The men of Nineveh, to whom Jonah preached, repented. (Gentiles). They will rise at the judgment to condemn these Pharisees for failing to receive someone greater than Jonah - the incarnate Son of God.

Verse 42 The Queen of Sheba, who also was a Gentile, spared no effort, nor expense, to hear "the wisdom of Solomon.

She believed, and said, the half hath not been told."

The Pharisees did not believe even though God incarnate stood in their midst. She also would rise at the judgment and condemn them for their unbelief.

Note at this point that the Lord is greater than the temple - Jonah - Solomon.

The empty house Verses 43-45

These verses are important, in that they give, in capsule form, the history of Israel, past - present - and future.

The unclean spirit was the idolatry, which possessed the nation from the time of its bondage in Egypt to the Babylonian captivity.

The captivity temporarily cured Israel of its idolatry. It was as if the unclean spirit had gone out of the man.

The Jews even to this day are not idolaters. They are like a house that is empty - swept - and put in order.

The Savior sought admission to that empty house. "Your house is desolate." It was indeed empty - they did not

acknowledge nor worship the true God. They also refused to receive Christ, their Messiah.

Because of their refusal to allow Christ to enter into their individual and national life, in a coming day the spirit of idolatry will return.

Israel will be possessed by the worst form of idolatry, the apostate nation will worship the Antichrist. Then follows the Great Tribulation.

Our Scripture passage says, "that the last state of that man is worse than the first." Oh the severe judgment that awaits the Christ rejecter. Luke 16---Rev 20.

The central place of true relationships and discipleship. Verses 46-50

As Jesus concluded this controversy with the Pharisees, His mother and brothers arrived to talk with Him. They were anxious for Him, they thought He was out of His mind. Mark 3:21.

Jesus used the occasion to emphasize the "new relationship." Human relationships are superceded by the spiritual.

"Who is My mother and who are My brothers?"---there He pointed to His disciples. "Behold My mother and My brethren."

When we do the will of the Father there is not only the new spiritual relationship there is the added thought of "discipleship."

In closing, note, that Mary did not occupy any special privilege as far as access into His presence was concerned. Secondly, the mention of Jesus' brothers strikes a blow at the teaching that Mary was a perpetual

virgin. Those who accompanied her were her sons and the half-brothers of the Lord.

Psalm 69:7-8—Matt 13:55—Mark 3:31-32; 6:3.

John 7:3, 5—Acts 1:14—1 Cor 9:5—Gal 1:19.

Last Visit to Nazareth

Matthew 13:53-58

After concluding His discourse at the Sea of Galilee, the Lord went back to Nazareth, His hometown. He was called Jesus of Nazareth.

In His earlier visit, Luke 4:16-29, the people with whom He had been raised attempted to throw Him over a cliff.

His second and final visit produced the same rejection. Even though they were astonished at His wisdom and reported miracles, they still refused to believe that He was the Son of God. They said, "He is just a carpenter's son." Even His own family refused to believe in Him. John 7:5 "For neither did His brethren believe in Him."

The people of Nazareth are eternally the poorer for rejecting the Lord because, "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief."

The tragedy of unbelief. The rejection of the Nazarenes reflected the attitude of the nation.

There is a brighter side---at this point, the Lord's family would not believe Him. After the resurrection, His family evidently believed in Him. In Acts 1:14, we find Mary and the Lord's brothers, engaged in prayer and supplication with those in the upper room.

"James" is singled out for special mention in 1 Corinthians 15:7. "After that He was seen of James - the Lord's brother." Later he became a leader in the church in Jerusalem. Acts 12:15-21. He also wrote the Epistle of James.

Matthew 14:1-12 The murder of John the Baptist

At this point in Matthew we are introduced to Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. His title was “tetrarch,” which means, “ruler of the fourth part of the kingdom.”

When he heard of Christ’s miracles, his conscience began to bother him. He was convinced that John the Baptist had risen from the dead.

In verses 3 thru 12 we have a literary flashback. Matthew goes back in time to the circumstances surrounding the death of John the Baptist.

John had denounced Herod for his adulterous relationship with Herodias, his brother’s wife. He was living in unblushing adultery. For his faithfulness to the Word of God, he was put in prison. 2 Sam 12. Nathan. “Thou art the man.”

Later, on his birthday, as the daughter of Herodias performed a lascivious and lewd dance, he was so infatuated that he offered her anything up to the half of his kingdom.

The wicked Herodias asked, through her daughter, for the head of John on a platter. John was executed - the king was sorry - and her action haunted him for the rest of his life. When he heard of the activities of Jesus, the gruesome episode returned to torment him.

Though Herod was conscience stricken, he was determined to kill Jesus just as he had killed John. Luke 13:31-32. Get Thee out and depart from here; for Herod will kill Thee. Jesus said to His informants, “Go and tell that fox” etc.

The word fox is feminine. Jesus said, "Go tell that vixen." Was He really referring to Herodias, the real power behind the throne?

Herod finally met Jesus. Luke 23:6-11. He was exceedingly glad - he was desirous to see him for a long time - He hoped to see a miracle. Instead, the Lord answered him nothing. He was met by stunning silence.

Then Herod and his soldiers treated Him with contempt, mocked Him, arrayed Him in a purple robe and sent Him back to Pilate.

Maybe this final rejection precipitated his downfall. Shortly after this, Herod lost prestige and power. His armies were defeated - He was banished to France, and then Spain, where he died.

The feeding of the five thousand: Verses 15-21 When Jesus saw the multitudes He was "moved with compassion." Jesus used this word 8 times. This miracle is mentioned in all four Gospels, the only one that is. In John 6 it is used as one of the seven signs which John used to prove that Jesus was the Son of God.

The miracle itself is majestic. 5000 hungry men---5 loaves and two fish, the lunch of a little boy. The disciples said, "Send them away." The Lord "knew what He would do." John 6:6.

The boy gave his lunch to the Lord. Jesus took it - blessed it - then the miracle of multiplication.

Some lessons from this miracle.

Give what you have to the Lord and He will bless it.

The little lad gave his lunch, 5 small loaves and two fish.

Shamgar used an ox goad. Slew 600 Philistines. Judges 3:31.

David used a sling. Killed Goliath. 1 Samuel 17.

Dorcas used a needle. Clothed the poor saints. Acts 9.

Rahab used some string. Saved herself and her house. Joshua 6.

Samson used a jawbone. Slew a thousand men. Judges 15:15.

Moses uses a rod. Opened the Red Sea. Exodus 14.

They were only small things, but all were used by God. Other things God used: Nail - trumpets - pitchers - lamps - millstone. Obey all of His commands. They took the broken pieces of bread and distributed them to the multitude.

Conserve the results. There were 12 baskets of bread and fish left over after the 5,000 men plus women and children (10,000-15,000) were fed.

The spiritually hungry multitude are all around -“give ye them to eat.” The multitudes hunger was only satisfied for a short time. Those who feed upon the “living bread,” Christ, shall be satisfied forever. John 6:58 “He that eateth of this bread shall live forever.”

Thousands were fed on this memorable day; since then millions have been saved as they received Christ, by faith, as the Bread of Life.

Matthew 17

During the time the Lord and His three favored disciples were on the Mount of glory, the rest of the group were having their problems in the valley. They had miserably failed in a healing mission. The distraught father was waiting for the Savior. Kneeling before Him, he asked the Savior to have mercy on his son. He suffered terribly from some form of epilepsy, which caused him to fall into the fire and into water. The father had taken his son to the disciples for help, but they had been powerless to cure. The Lord cured the man's son.

The reason for their failure was their faithlessness.

Verse 17. "According to your faith be it unto you" Their powerlessness came from their unbelief. Verse 20.

Capernaum

Their total lack of faith was a spiritual disaster.

The Lord said to them, "if you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could command a mountain to be cast into the sea, and it would happen. Nothing is impossible to true faith." The smallest amount of faith in a great God can overcome the mightiest difficulties. Paul said, "I believe God" Acts 28.

The Lord said that this form of Satanic power will only yield to the twin forces of prayer and fasting. Crucifying of the self-life.

The words of Jesus would imply that the exercise of these two forces in faith would insure spiritual victory at any time.

Prayer---that is the hand upon God.

Fasting---that is the hand on self.

Prayer brings God in---Fasting puts self out.

Prayer lays hold on divine resources---Fasting cancels human resources.

I take it that the Lord was not speaking of denying oneself of certain foods, but rather referring to the denial of selfish desires and lusts in every form. Divine power banishes all need for human strength.

Consider at this time the Lord's stinging censure of their faithlessness and the accompanying powerlessness.

Exercised believing faith is mentioned five times in Matthew as related to miracles of a Centurian-Syrophenician woman. Four times the Lord rebukes those who were fearful and displayed little or no faith. Into which of the categories to you come.

In verses 22 and 23, Jesus, without warning, reminded His disciples that He would be put to death. This is the second time He forewarned His disciples of Him impending death.

Notice in both instances He reminded them that He would rise again. They were exceedingly sorry when they heard this prediction and evidently missed the resurrection promise.

Verse 24-27 The miracle of the tribute money from the fish.

When the Lord and His disciples arrived in

Capernaum, the tax collectors asked Peter if his Teacher paid Temple Tax. (explain) Peter answered in the affirmative.

When Peter came home, Jesus spoke to him first. Quote Verse 25.

In those days a ruler taxed his subjects and strangers for the support of his kingdom and family. Today our method of taxation is different. So Peter answered correctly when he said, “strangers” Verse 26.

Jesus then pointed out that the sons are free. Verse 26. The point Jesus was making, was, that the Temple was God’s house. Jesus was the Son of God, so for Him to pay tribute for the support of the Temple, would be the equivalent of paying tribute to Himself.

Verse 27 The Lord agreed to pay the tax rather than cause needless offense.

Notice now the miracle and the display of the omniscience of the Lord. Quote the verse here. The Lord knew which one of all the fish in the Sea of Galilee had a shekel in its mouth. He knew the exact location of that fish. He also knew that it would be the first fish that Peter would catch.

The first fish Peter caught had a shekel in its mouth, sufficient to pay the tax for Jesus and Peter.

He knows when a worthless sparrow falls to the ground. He is so precise that He knows the number of our hairs.

Be not anxious for your life - what you shall eat or wear. He knows when you have need of these things. So, “Fear not little flock.”

Matthew 18

Verses 1-4

Despite the teachings of Jesus regarding the spiritual aspect of the kingdom, the disciples had not understood. Hence they asked the question, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

To answer their question Jesus called a little child to Him.

When they had gathered round Him, Jesus revealed two great principles, (1) For men to be converted and enter this spiritual kingdom they must become childlike in their faith.

(2) Those that would be great in this kingdom must live humbly as a little child.

The Lord is the great example. John 13 and Philippians 2. Note that these standards and values are the exact opposite of those practiced in the natural world. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3.

In verses 5-6 there seems to be a switch from the natural to the spiritual. Blessed thought, that those who receive and care for a newborn babe in Christ actually receive Christ Himself.

Conversely, those who cause a new Christian to sin, it would be better for that person to be drowned in the deep sea, with a great weight around his neck.

Verses 7 through 9. These verses apply to unconverted adults. In verse six those referred to are converted adults. In verse 7 they are unconverted adults. The Lord

warns them that it would be better for them to cut off their hands or a foot than to be guilty of using them to lead a young convert away from Christ. They are also instructed to pluck out their eye, lest they should take advantage of a new believer.

It is better to be disadvantaged in life, than to be cast into Gehena (Eternal ???).

Verse 10 and 11 are interesting. Quote. Godly men have written several interpretations of these verses. Some believe that each child has a guardian angel who appears before God's face on His behalf. If this is so, then it is dangerous for anyone to despise or neglect that little one.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that the word "angels" should be spirits, the spirits of departed children appearing before God's face.

Whatever is meant here in the context is not clear but the full concept of the Scriptures lead me to believe that both truths are true. This raises an interesting question. Where do children go who die too young to believe?

According to John 3:18, those who are lost are those who refuse to believe. That charge cannot be laid against a child. See 2 Samuel 12:21-23. David distinctly declares, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Verse 11 also seems to indicate that children go to heaven when they die. In Luke 19:10 the word "seek" is included in the verse. All men are in view of the one---sinners who have gone astray and need to be sought.

In our present study the verse says that "the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." Infants and little

children have not strayed, they are saved by the fact that Christ died for them. See also verse 14.

This is comforting to us for we have a little one already in heaven.

Verses 12-14

These verses tell us of the great value that the Lord places upon a child. "He leaves the ninety and nine and goeth after the last one." He rejoices more over the found one, than over the ninety-nine.

Verse 14 It is God's will and desire that all young children should be saved.

Verses 15-20. Discipline in the local church.

Discipline has always been a difficult area in the local church. There has been much controversy, conflict and division over it.

I have come to the conclusion that this fault has been caused, not because we do not know the principles involved, but we are afraid of the consequences.

Verses 15-17

These verses contain explicit instructions concerning the responsibility of a believer who has been wronged by another believer.

Step number 1, is to go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.

Step 2, if he will not hear thee, then take two other believers along in the hope that he will repent and be restored.

Step 3, if he will not hear them, then take it to the church. If he refuses to hear the church, he has to be put out of fellowship.

Verse 18 is closely linked with the aforementioned assembly action. When an assembly moves prayerfully under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in obedience to the Word, excommunicates an unrepentant believer, this action is honored in heaven.

On the other hand, when the disciplined person has repented and confessed his sin and the assembly restores him to fellowship, that action also is ratified by God.

An example of this procedure is found in 1 Corinthians 5. The assembly was urged by Paul to put away the incestuous brother. This action was ratified by God.

In 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 Paul again instructs the assembly to receive this repentant believer back to the fellowship. This man was loosed from his sin, in heaven and should be on earth.

Verse 19. This verse primarily must be interpreted within the framework of the context. The prayer mentioned here is in connection with assembly discipline.

There are times when believers are perplexed and unsure as to what course of action should be taken. Our verse tells us, that wherever two brethren agree, and come to God in prayer, being directed by the Holy Spirit, God will act for them and show them His will. Note the certainty of the promise.

Verse 20. Primarily this verse refers to a meeting where the church, small or larger, is seeking to bring about the

reconciliation of two brethren, estranged through some sin.

To meet in “His name” means by and under His authority. In humility of spirit, acknowledging this authority, and in obedience to the Word. Those who meet in this fashion are assured of the Lord’s presence.

In a “secondary” way this could refer to the composition of a New Testament church in its simplest form.

It also could refer to the “prayer meeting” and to “all meetings” of believers where Christ is the gathering center.

No group can claim exclusive rights to this privilege for “Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Verse 21-22 The Question of Forgiveness

Peter asks the Lord as to how often he should forgive a brother who has sinned against him. The old Jewish teaching was that three times was enough.

Peter was attempting to be generous in doubling the usual limit of forgiveness.

Jesus answered in verse 22 “Not seven times, but seventy times seven.” This probably is a figurative number. Peter - Israel. The inference is that we should forgive indefinitely. The Lord’s prayer.

From verse 23 to the end of the chapter, the Lord illustrates the necessity of forgiveness on the human level, in the light of the grace of God in forgiving us sinners. As sinners we have been forgiven an enormous amount by God. Therefore it is unreasonable that any believer should refuse to forgive a small amount.

The Lord illustrates His point by telling of a king who wanted to clear His books of bad debts.

The first debtor brought to justice owed 10,000 talents. This was equal to ten million dollars. The man was bankrupt. Verse 25. So the king ordered that he and his family should be sold into slavery until his debt was paid.

Verse 26 The condemned debtor pleaded and begged for time, promising to pay all.

Verse 27 When the king saw his apparent distress and contrite attitude he forgave him his entire debt. This was not justice, but a display of grace at its highest and best. Matthew 21.

Verses 28-30 When this man was released, he went to one who owed him 20 dollars, and demanded payment. He grabbed him by the throat. The man pled for an extension of time. It was not granted, and he was thrown in jail.

Verse 31 Other servants of the king were infuriated and reported this inconsistent behavior to him.

Verses 32-35 He was furious with this ungrateful and merciless lender. He had been forgiven such a huge debt, and yet refused to forgive such a pittance.

The application is clear. God is this King.

We his servants had amassed a huge debt which we were unable to pay. See Luke 7. Then in wonderful grace and compassion the Lord paid the debt and forgave us all our sin. Isaiah 53:6 "Jehovah hath laid upon Jesus" etc.

In view of this, God says, that if you have been wronged and the one who has wronged you, really and sincerely apologizes and asks forgiveness for his 20-dollar sin. Then forgive him. If you who have been forgiven by God for your ten million dollar sin, refuse to forgive him. Such behavior will not go unpunished. Such as one will be chastened in this life, and will suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

See Ephesians 4:32 "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

Matthew 19

The early part of this chapter is of tremendous importance and certainly relevant to present-day society.

The Lord was beginning His last journey to Jerusalem. Crowds were following Him for healing and teaching.

Verse 3 The Pharisees were there also, trying, as usual to trap the Lord. The question of divorce was a sensitive one in those days. The Jews themselves were split. One school was very liberal. The other school was very strict.

The question which they asked was loaded, no matter how the Lord answered, He would offend one party or the other.

The question, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for every cause?

Verse 4 In His answer the Lord took them back to creation and reminded them that God created one wife for Adam. The principle here is that a man should only have one living wife.

Verse 5 This verse reminds us that the marriage relationship supercedes all other relationships, including the parental relationship. God also states that in marriage the two participants become one.

Verse 6 "What God hath joined" etc. It is God's will that this divinely appointed union should not be broken by any human action or decree. See Ephesians 5:22-33.

Verse 7 The Pharisees thought that they had cornered Jesus, and reminded them of what Moses had said.
Read.

Verse 8 Jesus replied, that Moses had permitted divorce because of Israel's backslidden condition, but this was not God's will.

Verse 9 In this verse the Lord introduced something new and final (1) He declared with absolute authority that past leniency on divorce was henceforth discontinued. Every cause.

(2) That the only ground for divorce was fornication or adultery.

So then, everyone who has divorced their partners, for any other reason than adultery, and has remarried, is living in sin.

Those who have gone through divorce because of adultery, and both are living come under the teaching of Romans 7:1-3 and 1 Corinthians 7:39.

Jesus blesses the little children Verses 13-15

It was the parents who brought the children to Jesus. Parent's responsibility. They brought them, "that He should put His hands on them and pray." He took some of them up in His arms. What a privilege. The disciples thought that this was an unwarranted intrusion into the privacy of Jesus, and sought to turn them away.

Jesus intervened with those memorable words, "Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." A.S.V.

The lessons from this incident are obvious.

(1) Children who wish to receive Christ as Savior should be prayerfully encouraged---not held back. On the other hand children should not be pressured into making a profession. The dangers and delights of child

evangelism. They should be protected from high-pressure methods of evangelism. No one knows the age of the youngest person in hell.

(2) These words of the Lord answer the question. What happens to children who die before reaching the age of accountability? Jesus said, "to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." Blessed thought.

Children do not have to become adults to be saved. But adults have to become like children to be saved.

The rich young ruler Verses 16-22. "The great refusal"

This incident is in contrast to the preceding one. There we saw that the kingdom of heaven belongs to little children. Here we see how difficult it is for rich adults to enter.

Note the apparent sincerity of this young man. Verse 16. He came running and kneeled before Jesus. Mark 10.

The question which he asked, "Good Master what must I do to inherit eternal life?" showed his ignorance and insincerity.

(1) He called Jesus, Teacher or Master, putting Him on the same level as other teachers of His day. Error on Mount of Transfiguration.

(2) He spoke of acquiring eternal life by his works and riches. "I do."

Both of these concepts are vital mistakes.

Verse 17 Notice the grace of the Lord here. In response to the young mans salutation "Good"---master. The Lord said that only God was good; in this reply He gave the young man an opportunity to acknowledge His deity. No response.

In answer to the second part of his question, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? The Lord answered him as living under the law. Keep the commandments in their absolute form and you will have life. Verse 17.

The reaction this should have produced in the young man was confession and repentance of sin and a plea for Jesus to save Him.

There was evidently no real sense of sin, and in order to evade the force of the Savior's words asked, "Which?"---commandments.

Jesus listed five commandments. Verses 18 and 19. Then He climaxed them by saying "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

This young man still untouched by any sense of sin or guilt, said "All these things have I kept from my youth up: What lack I yet?"

The Lord with the accuracy of a skillful surgeon exposed the cancer, "You say you love your neighbor as yourself, and yet you hold on selfishly to your wealth, while others around you are starving."

Verse 21 If thou wilt be perfect, that is reach the ultimate goal of eternal life---confess your sin, acknowledge My deity, receive Me as your personal Savior, give your riches to the poor, lay up treasure in heaven, and come and follow Me. Conversion and discipleship---this applies to us all in some in some degree.

Verse 22 The young man was speechless, he was shocked at the cast of discipleship, he loved his riches, and the pleasure they brought. He turned his back on

the Lord and walked away quietly in deep disappointment. "The Great Refusal." In all possibility he put himself out with the grace of God. He would die a rich man, but would be a pauper in hell for eternity.

Verse 23 Quote. The prevailing opinion of the Jews was, that through their riches they could enter heaven. They were adamant in their belief. The Lord said, "It is only with great difficulty that a rich man will enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Verse 24 In fact, He said it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

The needle mentioned here is a surgeons needle or sewing needle. Note also the terms, " Kingdom of God" and " Kingdom of Heaven."

Verse 25 The disciples were amazed at the Lord's statement and asked Him "Who, then, can be saved?"

Our Lord's ministry and history proves that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." 1 Corinthians 1:26. Note it does not say "Not any" etc. It is not sinful to be rich, when one treats it as a stewardship entrusted to him to be administered for the glory of Him who gave it.

Verse 26 Humanly speaking, it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom, but with God's help there are some who do enter.

Humanly speaking it is impossible for anyone, rich or poor, to be saved. "Salvation is of the Lord." But it is far more difficult for a wealthy man to surrender his will to Christ, for salvation, than a poor man.

The apostles reward now and in the future kingdom.

Peter had heard the Lord tell the rich young ruler to forsake earthly riches and lay up treasure in heaven. Verse 21 and follow Him.

He then said to the Lord, "We have forsaken all, and followed thee. What shall we have therefore?" "What then shall be our reward?"

Verse 28 Jesus said unto "them." You that have followed Me in this life, will in the "regeneration" or Millennium, when I shall sit upon My throne of glory, you will sit upon twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel.

Verse 29 Then to all other believers who had forsaken houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children, or lands for My sake will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.

Verse 30 The Lord ended His discourse with a solemn warning. Those that seem to be first in the eyes of men may be last in God's eyes. Those who are despised by men, God may count worthy to advance to first place.

Matthew 20

The parable of the householder and the laborers. Verses 1-16.

Describe briefly what actually happened.

This parable is really an amplification of the Lord's answer to Peter's question in Chapter 19:27, "What shall we have, therefore?"

In the context of Chapter 19 the Lord told Peter that the disciples would sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Verse 28.

In Verse 29 "all" who have sacrificed houses, lands, friends, and family for Christ's sake will be rewarded one hundredfold.

Then in Verse 30 the Lord adds a rider "The first shall be last, and the last shall be first."

This parable in Chapter 20 is the explanation of this profound statement.

There are several lessons here for our admonition.

(1) The place of prominence goes to the lowliest---"the last shall be first." Verse 30 and Verse 16.

(2) God is sovereign. Verse 15 "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to Me."

God's judgment and His subsequent reward is not according to length of service or even according to the work performed. Much activity can be inspired by pride and selfish ambition. First, maybe in man's estimation, but last in God's.

On the other hand, ones service can be obscure, hidden from the eyes of men, yet performed in love and gratitude to God and Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Such service may be last in man's estimation, but first in God's.

At the day of manifestation every man will be rewarded for his work according to its character, and not for the amount of time put in.

Jesus did not live long but He lived deep. In His 3 ½ years of public service He accomplished more than any other man who had served a lifetime. See Acts 2:36. Raised up, made Lord and Christ. Last, so far as man was concerned, but first in God's reckoning.

John the Baptist and Murry McCheyne are other examples.

Verses 17-19 Jesus predicts, for the third time His death and resurrection. The ministry of Jesus was relentlessly taking Him toward the Cross. John 12:27-28 Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? As they journeyed to Jerusalem, the Lord separated His disciples from the multitude and informed them, for the third time, that at the end of the road, there was a cross---not a visible, glorious kingdom.

It had been announced, in Gen 3:15, that Satan would "bruise His heel." The shadow of the cross hung over the Lord from the time He was born. Isaiah 50:7-- Flint. Luke 9:51--Steadfastly. Note the accuracy of Christ's prediction. He would be betrayed to the chief priests and scribes. Judas betrayed Him. Jewish leaders would condemn Him to death.

Since they did not have the authority to inflict capital punishment, they would turn Him over to the Gentiles = Romans. He would be mocked, scourged, and crucified by them.

But death would not be able to keep its prey--He would be raised on the third day. Despite the three references to His death, Matthew 16:21-23, 17:22-23, and in this passage, the disciples failed to believe literally what Jesus was saying.

The request of the mother of James and John. Verses 20-28.

The following incident is a sad reflection on the baseness of human nature. "A man of sorrows" etc. It is interesting to note that on each occasion that the Lord mentioned His passion, there were immediate reactions from the disciples.

(1) In Chapter 16 after the Lord's first prediction of His suffering, Peter took Him and rebuked Him, saying, "Be it far from Thee Lord; this shall not happen to Thee."

(2) The second prediction was soon followed with the question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" Matthew 18:1.

(3) The third prediction brought James, John and their mother to Jesus with the request that they should receive the most important posts in the kingdom.

In each case they were thinking more of their own glory than of Christ's sufferings. How insensitive they were to revealed truth.

Verse 22 Jesus replied in this verse to the request of verse 21 "Ye know not what you ask." The cup and the baptism are described in Verses 18-19. The cup of

hatred and scorn culminating in total rejection. The baptism was the baptism of death at the hands of godless men. Jesus then asked them, "Are you able to drink this cup and endure this baptism?" They answered, "We are able."

Verse 23 Jesus said to them, "You shall indeed drink of My cup and be baptized with My baptism." James suffered a martyr's death. John lived a martyr's life and died a martyr's death.

The Lord adds a very significant thing, He says that positions in the kingdom are determined by the Father.

Verse 24 The other ten disciples were furious when they heard of James and John's request. Maybe the cause of their anger was because they themselves wanted to be the greatest.

Verse 25 The Lord contrasted the worldly system with the spiritual. The Lord said, "In the Gentile world, greatness is linked to power, prominence, authority and rule. But in the spiritual kingdom greatness is linked to humility-service-and becoming a servant. Verse 26.

Verse 27 Those then that "would be chief among you, let him be your servant."

Verse 28 The Lord Himself is the perfect example of this truth. Notice the words "Serve" and "give." Examples-- Moses "The meekest man in all the earth." Epaphroditus See Philippians 2:25-29. Contrast Diotrefes. 3 John 9 "Who loveth to have the preeminence among you."

The healing of two blind men. Verses 30-34.

As Jesus and His followers were leaving Jericho, they were surrounded by a huge crowd. Two blind men who

were begging by the wayside heard Him come. They cried, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David."

These men had some spiritual insight and recognized Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. Their faith was rewarded, in that, the Lord gave them their sight.

"And they followed Him."

The account of Mark and Luke differs from Matthew's account. Mark mentioned only one blind man whose name was Bartimaeus. Matthew mentions two--- Bartimaeus was the spokesman for the two.

In Matthew and Mark, the incident is said to have occurred as Jesus left Jericho. In Luke, it is said to have happened as He drew near to the city. The simplest explanation is that there were two Jericho's. The O.T. Jericho---and the new Jericho, which Herod the Great had built. The miracle of healing took place as Jesus was leaving one city and entering the other.

Matthew 21

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The final hours of Jesus' life on earth drew near. The cross was less than a week away, Jesus knew this.

Matthew 20:17-19. In sharp contrast to the shame of the cross is the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, described by all four gospels. The Lord's heart must have been stirred.

Jesus entered into Jerusalem in a manner which showed that He was the Messiah, the Son of David.

The four accounts of this triumphal entry differ in some respects. John, who wrote his Gospel sixty years after the event, gives some interesting details, including the fact that the night before the triumphal entry, Jesus had an intimate supper in the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. John 12:1-11.

The prelude to His triumphal entry into Jerusalem is interesting. He sent two of His disciples into the village to bring to Him an ass and its colt. The owner possibly knew Jesus. "Loose them - bring them unto Me."

Only Matthew records that there were two animals and that Jesus sat on the colt. Verses 4-5 This was done that Zechariah 9:9 might be fulfilled. Note two interesting things here.

(1) That Jesus rode upon an unbroken colt.

(2) Zechariah prophesied that the Messiah King of Israel would enter Jerusalem in a meek and lowly way riding a colt the foal of an ass.

No king had ever come to Israel in this manner, they all came on the finest of horses.

Verses 8-9 As Jesus rode into the city: The multitudes were delirious with joy. They took their garments and laid them on the royal route. They cut palm branches and spread them in the way. This is how kings were welcomed.

There were two multitudes. Verse 9. One accompanied Jesus, possibly they had witnessed Christ's miracle in raising Lazarus. They were also met by another crowd coming from the city.

These two groups joined their voices, fulfilling Zech 9:9, crying "Hosanna to the Son of David" etc. Verse 9. The most significant part of their acclamation was that they recognized Him as the "Son of David."

Verse 10 The city was moved – stirred – startled – perplexed - bewildered and they asked, "Who is this?" The multitude with Him declared that He was "Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." The form of the verb "said" indicated that they repeated this declaration over and over again. Verse 11.

Jesus' second cleansing of the Temple. John 2:13-16.

The first cleansing took place at the beginning of His public ministry. This cleansing took place as His ministry was drawing to a close.

The first cleansing was ineffective in bringing about a permanent cure.

Here we find that business was as usual in the outer court of the Temple. Animals and birds for sacrifice were being bought and sold. Money changers were converting foreign currencies into the half-shekel which Jewish men

had to pay for the upkeep of the Temple and its services. Profiteering flourished on every hand.

Verse 12. These evil men had a lucrative monopoly. There was no thought for the Presence of God, nor the purity of the House of God.

In this instance, Luke 4 - John 18, as in the first cleansing - no resistance was made as He overturned the table's racketeers and the chairs of the pigeon sellers.

Verse 13 Jesus then faced those whom He had humiliated and reminded them of Isaiah's words "My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves."

Consider at this point how we need the great Cleanser Himself to sweep through the gatherings of God's people, cleansing and purifying from sin - burnishing the gold - and burning up the dross.

Verse 14 The next scene takes place in the Temple court - while the humiliated merchants are gathering their goods together.

The blind and the lame came to Him and He healed them all.

Verse 15 The hostile eyes of the chief priests and scribes saw the phenomenon of Deity at work. They heard the spontaneous praise from hearts that were strangely moved. Young and old alike responded crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David."

Verse 16 They were enraged, "Do you hear what they are saying?" they asked. Jesus answered by quoting to them. Psalm 8:2.

The religious leaders eyes were blind, their ears were deaf, their mouth spoke platitudes, but their hearts were as stone and far from God.

Those untrained and uneducated were sensitive to the divine revelation, while those who had spent their lives studying the Scriptures were blind and antagonistic.

Verse 17 He left them, and went out of the city into Bethany. This was a frequent stopping place for the Lord. He had special and tender associations there. His greatest miracle was performed when He raised Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus' Words from the Cross

The Lord Jesus uttered seven phrases from the cross. The middle phrase was the shuddering cry of desolation and devastation, spoken in a loud voice: "My God, my God why hath thou forsaken me?" (See Matthew 22:46 and Mark 15:34) It is significant what precedes and follows this cry. The first phrase Jesus uttered was, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) Jesus' final statement, spoken again in a loud voice was, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." (Luke 23:46) Between these two cries there is Emmanuel crying out, once again loudly, to his Father: "My God, my God." The apostle John is actually the only author of the Gospels who mentions Jesus adding here, "It is finished." (John 19:30)

We should also note the two instances where the Lord was offered a drink while on the cross. "The Lord said, 'I thirst.' Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth." (John 19:28-29) Then Jesus is offered "vinegar to drink mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it." (Matthew 27:34) It has been suggested that this combination of vinegar and gall could have been somewhat of a pain reliever, a stupefying potion, or an opiate that would ease the physical suffering of Jesus. Yet Jesus refused to drink the mixture.

In this scene on Calvary we should also note Jesus' evident loneliness on the cross, because Jesus appeared quite alone during this experience. For example, Matthew 27:27-40 tells of how "the soldiers mocked

Him” and “the people ridiculed Him.” In Matthew 27:41-44, “the scribes taunted Him,” and “the thieves despised Him.” Previously, Jesus had pointed out His critics, saying, “The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.” (Matthew 11:19) He was declared a blasphemer and an imposter, and yet He was a friend to all. The people, the ones He came to save, had betrayed Him and crucified Him.

Psalm 69 presents the Lord’s broken heart in His death: “Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none...they hated Me without a cause.” Let us also note what others said of the Messiah’s innocence. In Luke 8:25, Jesus’ audience marveled at Him and asked one another, “What manner of man is this?” Judas said, “I have betrayed innocent blood.” (Matthew 27:4) Even Pontius Pilate’s wife exhorted her husband, “Have nothing to do with that just man” and then Pilate later claimed, “I find no fault in Him” and washed his hands of the matter to declare his own innocence. (See Matthew 27:19 and John 18:38) On the cross, the dying thief proclaimed, “He has done nothing amiss” and the centurion witnessing Jesus’ death declared, “Truly, this was the Son of God.” (Luke 23:41 and Matthew 27:54) So when Jesus cried out, “Why hath thou forsaken me?” this was the first and only time this question was ever asked. At this point an eternal unbroken communion was broken. This communion between the Son and the Father is unfathomable and unexplainable to us!

We should also ask ourselves when the cry was made. Was it during the hours of darkness? Matthew 27:46

identifies the time as the ninth hour (at nighttime) when Jesus cried out. For this reason, some scholars believe that the word “hast” could be replaced with the word “didst” thou forsake me?” signifying that Jesus had already been forsaken as a past event. Indeed, it was no new experience for the Lord to be forsaken. Several times the religious leaders had tried to kill Him. His brothers, His nation, and many followers did not walk along with Him. Judas betrayed Him, Peter denied Him, and the disciples forsook Him. Up until this time, although men had continually forsaken Him, He had always been able to turn to His Father for help. However, this refuge was denied on the cross. His Father had forsaken Him, for God is a holy and uncompromising God, demanding the full price for the redemption of mankind. The Lord Jesus was left alone, abandoned, and ultimately forsaken, all for our sakes.

Prayer & Worship

Prayer

1. Payson wore the hardwood boards into grooves where he pressed his knees so often and so long.
2. William Bramhall, famous in Methodist annals for personal holiness, was a powerful preaching and marvelous answer to prayers. For hours at a time he would pray, he almost lived on his knees. He went over his circuit like a flame of fire. The fire was kindled by the time he spent in prayer.
3. Dr. Judson, a true man of prayer, impressed an empire for Christ, and laid the foundation of God's kingdom with impenetrable granite in the heart of Bumah. This praying saint mightily impressed the world for Christ.
4. What the church needs today is not more or better machinery, not new organizations, or more novel methods. It needs men whom the Holy Spirit can use, men of prayer, men mighty in prayer.

We should try to live the Sermon on the Mount. Only born-again ones can do this with the help of the Holy Spirit. Happiness is the great question confronting mankind. The whole world is longing for happiness. Describe how they seek it. Living the Sermon on the Mount brings real happiness. The Beatitudes is a picture of what I as a Christian should be like.

Note how strong the early church was in prayer. Note also the unity of the believers.

Acts 2:1—Pentecost. No doubt the believers were praying, and they were also of one accord and in one

place. The result was they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 3:44—All that believed were together. They continued steadfastly.

Acts 4:31—When they prayed together the place was shaken and they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:33—They were of one heart and one soul, with great power gave their witness and great grace was upon them all.

Psalms 133—Adds power to the principle of unity and harmony. Only in these conditions can we expect God's full blessing.

Psalms 126—In this Psalm we get the picture of a local church striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

"They who sow in tears shall reap in joy." He who goes forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing.

"No man is greater than his prayer life."

The preacher who is not praying is playing. The people who are not praying are straying. The poverty-stricken church is most stricken in her attitude to prayer.

We have many organizers, but few agonizers. Many players and payers, but few prayers. Many singers, few clingers. Lots of would-be pastors, but few wrestlers. Many fears, but few tears. Much fashion but little passion. Many interferers, few intercessors. Many writers, few fighters.

One of the greatest causes for anxiety in the modern church is money. That which tries the modern church most, troubled the NT church the least. Our accent is on

paying, theirs was on praying. When we have prayed the place is taken, when they had prayed the place was shaken.

In the matter of NT, Spirit-inspired, hell-shaking, world-breaking prayer never has so much been left to so few.

Oh the soul thrilling rapture

When I see His blessed face

And the luster of His kindly beaming eye

How my full heart will praise Him

For His mercy, love and grace

Who prepared for me

A mansion in the sky.

I shall know Him, I shall know Him

As redeemed by His side I shall stand

I shall know Him, I shall know Him

By the print of the nails in His hand.

Worship

Read John 4:19-24. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him."

Ephesians 2:3—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The meaning of the word "blessed."

The meaning of worship: prayer, thanksgiving, worship. See Colossians 1.

Worship is being taken up with God alone. "O Christ Thou art enough." Thanksgiving and praise is not worship.

It was when the Psalmist was overcome by the splendor and glory of the King that his heart overflowed in worship. Psalm 45.

The worship of the wise men: gold, frankincense, myrrh.

Note the order in the service and worship in the Tabernacle. The brazen altar, the service in the Holy place, true worship took place in the immediate presence of God, in the Holy of Holies.

You cannot worship what you cannot see by the eye of faith.

When the wise men saw Jesus they worshipped Him. When Peter saw the Lord through the eyes of the Father, he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." When Mary saw no one except Jesus she worshipped Him. When Thomas saw Jesus he said, "My Lord, and my God." When John saw the glorified Lord, he fell at His feet.

The Lord's Supper—We come to break bread and partake of the wine. We do this in remembrance of the Lord. In remembering Him everything and everyone should be forgotten. Abraham said, "Abide ye here with the ass, while I and the lad go yonder and worship."

We do not come to remember the Lord's death exclusively. We remember Him, in His pre-incarnate glory, His stupendous incarnation, His perfect life, His agony and the death on the Cross, His glorious resurrection, His present High Priestly work, His coming again.

We should never leave the Lord's Supper with Christ still on the Cross. We should leave triumphantly with Christ on the throne.

The Lord's Supper is not a sharing meeting. It should be directed toward Christ and show the difference between ministry and worship.

2 Samuel 23:9-10

"Eliezer smote his enemies till his hand was weary and his hand adhered to the sword."

Renounce all the policy of the age. Trample upon Saul's armor.

Grasp the Book of God. Trust the Spirit who wrote its pages. Fight with this weapon only and always. Cease to amuse and seek to arouse. Shun the clap of a delighted audience, and listen for the sobs of a convicted one.

Warn, plead and entreat as one who feels the waters of eternity creeping upon them.

"Love ever gives, forgives, outlives;

And ever stands with open hands;

And while it lives it gives,

For this is love's prerogative

To give and give and give."

"O how unlike the complex works of man

Heavens, easy, unencumbered plan!

Majestic in its own simplicity,

Inscribed above the portal from afar,

Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,

Legible only by the light thy give,

Stand the soul-quickenings words 'believe and live.'

Too many, shocked at what should charm them most

Despise the plain direction and are lost.” —William
Cowper

Spiritual Gifts

See Galatians 6—Ministering, Serving, Helping. Care, help, support, comfort, consolation, to supply a need. The attendants getting the Bride ready for her wedding. The trainers ministering to the bruised and battered boxer.

The purpose of God for Israel: fruit. A vine and its branches are only good for bearing fruit, not to build, make furniture, or fuel. The Lord is the true vine. We are the branches, and our only purpose as such is to bear fruit. Fruit-bearing depends on abiding communion and ultimate fellowship with the Lord. Every branch that does not abide does not bear fruit, and God takes it away. Every branch that bears fruit He cleanses, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Abiding—A branch abides in Christ by drawing all its nourishment from the vine. Spending time in prayer, reading and obeying His Word, fellowshiping with His people, and being conscious of our union with Him are ways to abide.

Note the difference between service and fruit-bearing. Pruning and cleansing are used to produce more fruit. Insecticides are unpleasant but necessary to kill bugs that would hinder or stop the fruit. So it is in God's dealing with us. Trials come our way. They are painful, but the end result is much more fruit and the Father is glorified. This is not just a young believer's experience. We older believers undergo trials, pruning and cleansing in order that we may graduate from the sphere of more fruit to much fruit, thereby glorifying God. Let's look at

a few men who knew the secret of abiding in Christ and bore much fruit.

Evangelism

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

“Do the work of an evangelist”—2 Timothy 4:5.

Watch in all things, endure, do the work.

Evangelize—make disciples. Pastor—baptize them.

Teacher—teach them.

The One who has been given “all the power and authority in heaven and earth will be with you until the end of the age.”

What were the last words of the Lord to His disciples?

“Go ye into all the world”, etc. Be witnesses and martyrs.

Note the Lord’s bountiful provision for His servants.

Acts 1:8—“You shall receive ‘miraculous power’ after the Holy Spirit is come upon you.”

See how evangelism spread in the Acts—Jerusalem, 2:7; Judea, 8:12; Samaria and uttermost parts, 13:28.

Acts covers a period of 30 years. Someone computed 250,000 souls were saved.

The Lord’s Supper and evangelism should compliment one another.

Note the personal ministry of the Lord and His disciples in John 3:35-45. Jesus found Andrew, Andrew found Peter, Jesus found Philip, Philip found Nathanael, Jesus found Nicodemus and the woman at the well.

Note the activities of the early Church in Acts 5:42.

“Daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” The result—Acts 6:7.

“The Gospel spread, the number of the disciples increased in Jerusalem, and many priests were obedient to the faith.”

Gift of Serving

James 5:13—Is any among you afflicted? Suffering? Let him pray. Is any glad at heart? He should sing praises to God.

Music was used greatly in the OT to assist in the worship of God. Asaph, who wrote Psalms 50 and 73-83, was also David’s choir director. There were also many instruments involved. See Psalm 150. Eight instruments were used.

Consider the song of victory at the Red Sea in Exodus 15. Song of the redeemed. He has triumphed gloriously. Who is like unto Thee? Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, awesome in wonders. V. 20—Miriam led the women in song.

Ezra 3:10-11—Notice also the burst of praise and singing when the Temple was dedicated and the walls were built.

Music

The importance of music in worship and service. See Ephesians 5:15-19.

v. 19—“Speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and making melody with all your heart unto the Lord.”

Colossians 3:16—"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. In all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another. In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing God's praises with thankful and joyful hearts."

1 Corinthians 14:15—I will pray with my spirit, by the Holy Spirit within me. But I will also pray intelligently.

I will sing with my spirit, enabled to do so by the Holy Spirit. I will sing intelligently, with my mind and understanding also.

When the Lord ascended to the Father's right hand all things were put under his feet—v. 22. How did this happen?

Paul's prayer in 3:13-19. Paul's third petition in verse 19, for the saints in all generations, is that they might have a deep knowledge and appreciation of the power that raised Jesus from the grave and transported Him through the domain of His archenemy to the throne of God's right hand. Paul calls this display of power the exceeding greatness of God's power.

F. B. Meyer says that "it is power." "It is exceedingly great power, power that is beyond the limits of human thought."

This is the power that God used in our redemption, which He uses in our preservation, and which He will yet use in our glorification.

To emphasize the awesome magnitude of this power, Paul describes the greatest exhibition of divine power that the world has ever known. It was the power that raised Christ out from among the dead and enthroned Him at His right hand.

The greatest display of God's power was not in creation, nor the deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea. The NT would teach us that the resurrection and ascension was the greatest demonstration of the exceeding greatness of God's unlimited power. The greatest demonstration of His love was Calvary.

When we review these great events, we should marvel at the immensity of God's power and worship Him for His omnipotence.

The Rapture

1 Corinthians 15:51, 58

“Behold I show you a mystery.”

A mystery is something which had never been revealed, but is now being made known. The word is never used in the OT. It is used 27 times in the NT, 21 times by Paul.

There are a number of sacred secrets which were kept from the people of God in past dispensations, but are now made known in the glorious dispensation of the Spirit.

One of these mysteries is the mystery of the “first resurrection” and the rapture of the living saints. This was a new revelation given to Paul. He received it “by the Word of the Lord”—1 Thessalonians 4:15.

“Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”

One has said that, “There is nothing more certain than death and taxes.” That is true as far as it goes, but in the future there will be a generation of believers who will be exempt from death. Like “Enoch” and “Elijah” they will be translated.

“We shall not all sleep”—or die. V. 51. for the believer death is like someone in a deep sleep. They put their tired, weary, worn body to sleep until the Lord comes to waken it again. It is only the body that sleeps. The real man, the spirit and the soul, is “absent from the body but present with the Lord, which is far better.”

“Paul was caught up into the third heaven.” This is the immediate dwelling place of God. The “first heaven” is the atmospheric heaven. The second is the stellar or starry heaven. The third is God’s dwelling place.

Paul on one occasion was caught up into the third heaven. 2 Corinthians 12:1, 4. He saw and heard things which, humanly speaking, were indescribable. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard.” 1 Corinthians 2:9.

In the first resurrection the body is raised in glory and the spirit comes to dwell in the body again. This is the state of the believer when Christ calls us forth from the tomb.

“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” Verse 51. There will be those who, in the generation when Christ comes, will not sleep. But whether living or dead we shall all be changed.

What a glorious change that will be. This change is necessary in order for us to take our place in the Kingdom. V. 50—“Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.”

v. 52—The change takes place instantly, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Describe a “moment”, and the “twinkling of an eye.”

Believers lying in hospital beds, weak and suffering, enduring days of pain and nights of anguish. Crying, “O Lord how long.” One moment enduring excruciating pain, and the next rising to meet the Lord in the air, in a body that can never suffer again. Dear ones whose brain has given out. Living in a vacuum, in a “moment”, in the “twinkling of an eye” will find themselves in their glorified body, with the intelligence of angels, looking

upon the glorious face of the Lord Jesus. Paul calls this, with good reason, “the blessed hope.”

When will all this take place? “At the last trumpet”—v. 52. 1 Thessalonians 4—“the trumpet of God.”

Describe the Roman military camp. The first blowing of the trumpet was “Strike the tents and prepare to move.” The second meant “Fall into marching order.” The third sounding meant “Forward march.” Translating this sequence into the events of 1 Thessalonians 4 it would go like this:

The “Shout” would equate with blast number one, “the dead rise.” The “Voice” would equate with blast number two, “the living changed.” The “Trumpet” would equate with the last trump, when all the redeemed will be translated into the presence of our glorious Lord, there to be with Him forever and forever.”

“Caught up to meet the Lord in the air.”

When will this take place? This event is undated by God, but it could take place today, tonight, it could take place at mid-night, mid-day, or in the morning. It will make no difference to those of us who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

v. 52—“The trumpet shall sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible.” Those believers who are alive at the time of this great event “shall be changed.”

v. 53—“This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Notice the two groups mentioned here. The “corruptible”, that is the dead, must put on incorruption. The dead, whose bodies have corrupted away, will be raised with incorruptible bodies.

The living described by Paul as “this mortal” refers to those who are alive, and they shall put on immortality.

“When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory.’” Verses 54-55.

Believers sorrow when loved ones are taken home, but the real sting of death is gone, the parting is only temporary. There will be a glorious reunion when Jesus comes again. The sting of death is gone, and one day the victorious grave will be vanquished and will be forced to release its captives to our glorious Lord.

Paul concludes this engrossing section by saying, “Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Death may seem at the moment to triumph. Describe experiences. But in a day to come, much nearer than many of us think, death will be swallowed up in victory at the coming of the Lord to the air.

“Therefore”—because these things are true—“my beloved brethren be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Verse 58.

The thought of the imminent coming of the Lord should spur us on to greater endeavor for Him.