

PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of the Gospel of Matthew

prepared by P. T. Butler Th.D

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These Bible study notes are provided for your use in the preparation of teaching the holy scriptures. They were meticulously prepared over many years to serve the Kingdom of God and aid in the growth of Christians of any age. Please use them in combination with prayer and diligence to promote the clear and honest declaration of God's word.

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TEACHER'S NOTES

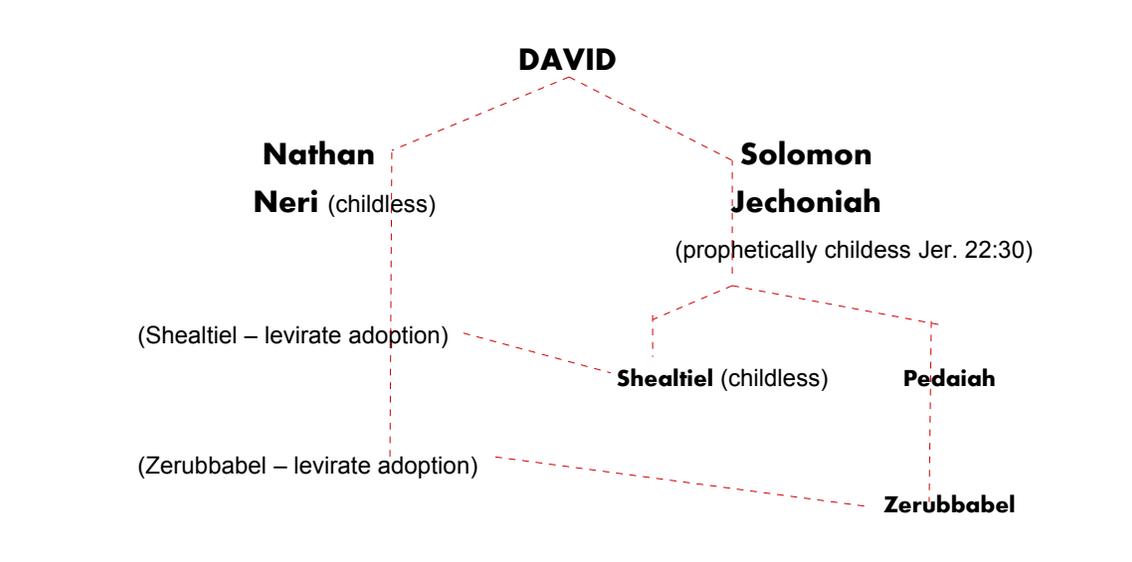
prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 1:1—2:23

The genealogies of Jesus' lineage, while boring to some people, ARE OF GREAT VALUE TO ANY SERIOUS STUDENT OF THE BIBLE. The genealogies prove the faithfulness of God. It is imperative to the veracity of God's word that anyone claiming to be the Messiah be able to verify his ancestry from Abraham and David. If it could be proven that Jesus was not descended from Abraham and David he would be a fake and an imposter and we should spend no more time studying the record of his life. GOD IS FAITHFUL—HE KEEPS HIS WORD! THE MESSIAH DID DESCEND FROM ABRAHAM AND DAVID! The genealogies show the wisdom of God. The genealogies emphasize the humanity of Jesus. When God desired to save man, God became a Man. God deals with the predicament of the human race through the human race (Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:5-18; Jn. 1:1-18). Our God is not like the "mythological" gods of the pagans! The genealogies of Jesus show the power of God. They show the power of God to overcome the obstacle of human oppositions. All the attempts of unbelievers to thwart God's redemptive program throughout history by obliterating the "chosen" family and nation (i.e., Egypt, Canaan, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, et al) were defeated. The sin and unbelief within the "chosen" family itself was overcome (sinful patriarchs, judges, kings, priests, adulterers, harlots, pagans, etc.). The national idolatry of Israel was unable to thwart the Messianic hope because there was always a "remnant" of the faithful willing to obey God in order to bring the Messiah to birth. While there was great sin in certain members of Christ's ancestry, THERE WAS NO SIN IN JESUS CHRIST. The genealogies prove that the spiritual heritage Jesus gives all who believe in him is more than just another human religion—Jesus was not a casualty of the human race, he was given to the human race and conquered all the frailties and weaknesses and condemnations of the human race. Unbelievers have said Jesus created his own Messianic niche in history by taking advantage of historical circumstances which chanced to be happening when he was born. Not so! These genealogies prove that the coming of Jesus was clearly planned and carefully prepared for—he was a child, not of the moment, but of the ages (1 Pet. 1:1-21; Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; Micah 5:2; Rev. 22:16).

The parenthetical statement in Luke 3:23 "Jesus...being (as was supposed the son of Joseph) the son (perhaps, grandson) of Heli..." seems to be confusing. Actually, Heli may very well have been Mary's father. Luke traces Jesus' ancestry all the way back to Adam to prove to the Greek mind that Jesus was descended from the original man. Matthew mentions only that Mary was the wife of Joseph—nothing of her own lineage. In Luke she is simply spoken of as the virgin mother. The reason for this is that the question of her lineage was of secondary interest to that civilization and culture because the legal inheritance always came through the "father's" lineage. There are good reasons to believe Mary was of the royal family of Judah (compare Acts 2:30 with 2 Sam. 7:12; Acts 13:23 with Rom. 1:3; Isa. 11:1 with 2 Tim. 2:8; Heb. 7:14; Rev. 22:16; Lk. 1:32,69). Matthew could not have spoken of Jesus as the son of Mary to Jewish readers even had it been known that she was of David's

lineage, for as such he had no royal rights to the throne of David through his mother's descent. Only as the son of Joseph could Jesus be heir of the covenants according to the Jews. Luke probably did not have Jewish legal descent in view and thus he gives the parenthetical ("as was supposed, the son of Joseph") statement. As Joseph's wife, Mary became a true member of David's family (if not by her own descent). Her child belonged to Joseph according to the principle which lay at the foundation of marriage among the Jews that what was born of the wife belonged to the husband. Since Jesus could truly and legally be said to be of the house and lineage of David through Joseph, it was unimportant to specify the family of Mary. The questions about Jesus claims to the throne of David would be whether he was of legal or legitimate descent. Such legal descent could only come through the father. So, Joseph (really Jesus' step-father) is listed as his father giving Mary the protection of Joseph's stainless name and royal lineage. Joseph is distinctly declared to be from David (Matt. 1:1-16) through Solomon, back to Abraham. The angel addresses Joseph as "the son of David." (Matt. 1:20). Luke says Joseph is of the house of David (Lk. 2:4). But Joseph was connected to two lines of descent if you compare Luke's list with Matthew's. How could Mary be from Luke's list connected to David, and Joseph also be connected to David? Well, there is nothing wrong with simply assuming that Joseph and Mary were kinsmen—both from the lineage of David. Zechariah and Elizabeth were both descended from Aaron! Any modern genealogy "buff" could tell you that such relationships occur all the time when you go back in a family "tree" far enough! But how could Joseph be the son of both Jacob (Matt. 1:15) and the son of Heli (Luke 3:23)? The same way Zerubbabel and Shealtiel were both connected to Jechoniah (Matt. 1:12) and Neri (Luke 3:27-28)—by levirate-law adoption. A possible explanation is shown below:



The prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 (and all his other prophecies of the Messiah) are shown by the statement of Matthew 1:22-23 to be filled-up-full in A PERSON, not a nation or a religious system. The virgin conception is imperative to the Christian faith. The fundamental integrity of both Matthew and Luke as honest, accurate, eyewitness historians is impugned if we do not believe their testimony. How could we believe anything else they recorded if we do not believe their accuracy in this matter? The honesty of God is brought into question if we do not believe Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 because God directed Isaiah to predict the event. It is not a matter of could it have happened---IT IS A MATTER OF DID IT HAPPEN OR NOT! "The virgin conception is the keystone which supports the...logical connection between the incarnation of God and the Messiah's necessary identification with humanity...." The Gospel of Matthew, Vol., I, by Harold Fowler, College Press. The OT prophets predict an incarnation of God (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:2). Without the supernatural conception and birth of Jesus historically documented, we have no answer to the demand, where and when did this incarnation occur? Without it, the prophets are still unfulfilled! Whoever denies the historicity of the virgin conception, destroys the basis for accepting the integrity of whatever else is claimed about Jesus and therefore cannot be considered to be a Christian. God's word is immutable. The passing of thousands of years of history, the advancement of human knowledge and technology, the finite incapacities of man, none of that can keep Gods' promises from coming to pass. He promised a virgin-conceived-Savior to the world and then he allowed centuries of human rebellion and chaos to intervene. But, in his own good time, and infinite wisdom, he chose an obscure Jewish virgin, in an obscure Jewish village, and supernaturally planted in her womb, the seed that would give birth to this Savior. God will keep his word! He will interrupt, invade, overpower and supersede all that is natural, if necessary, to do so. GOD CAN BE TRUSTED!

Mary was not a "perpetual" virgin. This is a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church. One Catholic writer says, "It cannot with decency be imagined that the most holy vessel which was once consecrated to be a receptacle of the Deity (Mary's womb) should be afterwards desecrated and profaned by human usage." But the NT plainly says Joseph "knew" her not until she had borne a son (implying strongly that he "knew" her afterward); that Jesus was her "firstborn" (implying that she bore others): and that she had other children by name, brothers of Jesus and sisters (unnamed) (Matt. 13:53-58). Back of the insistence of the RCC on the perpetual virginity of Mary is the desire to justify the celibate state of priests and nuns as the "holier state." This dogma teaches that there is something inherently unclean and defiling about marriage which is also contrary to the NT (1 Tim. 4:1-5). The virgin birth should humble us. If the Son of God, King of kings and Lord of heaven and earth, chose to come to this earth in the lowliest manner; as a baby in a woman's womb, live in a working man's home, eat the commonest food and wear common clothing, just to die for sinners so God could deal with men by grace, then we have no basis for pride. God chose human flesh for his Only Unique Son. Look on your fellow-men and learn, from God's coming in the flesh, to respect every human as wearing the flesh that Jesus wore. God was interested in all human beings. He did not choose angels to be brethren of his Son—he did not send his Son in the body of an animal—but in a human! And God used a woman as a human mother for his Son (Joseph became legal father to Jesus). They were lowly peasant people who loved God and desired to do his will.

The “wise-men” were men of the court of kings—probably of the territory of what we would today call Iraq or Iran. They were “advisors” to potentates. They often got their “wisdom” from ancient historical texts (like the Hebrew OT) and sometimes from astrology (predicting the future from studying the stars) or from other pagan superstitions. These “wise men” claimed to have seen “the star” of the Jewish Messiah and had come all those hundreds of miles (on camels, no doubt) to pay homage to him! But how would the “wise-men” of Mesopotamia (Iran, Iraq) know that an unusual star was to be applied to the birth of the Jewish Messiah? Well, there is a prophecy in Numbers 24:17, “I see him, but not now, I behold him, but not nigh: a star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel...” If that is not of the Messiah, who is it? The Jewish traditions (Haggadah & Midrashim) apply Num. 24:17 to the Messiah. Daniel was a “wise-man” of Babylon (Dan. 1:1—5:30). Daniel undoubtedly had access to the Numbers 24 prophecy. Daniel predicted the exact year when the Anointed One of God would appear in history and engage in his work (Dan. 9:24-27). These “wise-men” could have had Daniel’s prophecies handed down to them and they could have been looking for such phenomena. Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius write of a general feeling throughout the whole Roman world at this time of the coming of some great leader from Judea. Daniel would also have known of the other prophecies of the birth of the “ruler” of Israel (esp. Micah 5:2). After the exile of their ancestors the Jews scattered throughout the world of the 1st century to Assyria and Babylon were certainly looking for and talking about the prophecies of their Messiah. Perhaps God revealed exclusively to these Mesopotamian “magi” that this “star” which they saw was signaling the birth of the world’s Redeemer. God did speak directly to heathen potentates in OT times through dreams, visions, etc. (Dan. Ch. 1-6). The interesting thing is that these “wise-men” came “to worship” this king of the Jews! Does worship here mean believe in? Or does it simply mean pay homage to him as a courtesy? The questions of the wise-men indicate they expected this birth to be a matter of common knowledge by the time they arrived. What a surprise, to find those who lived at the very center of this great event to be ignorant of it! The star, by the way, was a miraculous star: (a) No nova (suddenly brightening star) is recorded near 5 B.C.; (b) planetarium history shows Kepler’s conjunction of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn in 6 B.C. never formed one star but remained 3 distinct stars; (c) the star of Bethlehem was seen only by the wise-men. Herod and others apparently knew nothing of it; (d) the star of Bethlehem moved!—natural stars do not change to the naked eye; they do not change course at all!

“The king of the Jews, ruler of Israel, Anointed of God, Messiah of the world,” was to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Bethlehem was an inconspicuous village. Most people would have expected the “king of the Jews” to be born in Jerusalem the capital city. The Hebrew word “Bethlehem” literally means, “House of Bread.” Imagine! The Prince of Heaven being born, probably without a midwife, in a cold, animal barn inhabited by insects, and smelling of animal feces. Herod lived in a state of constant paranoia about his throne. He constantly feared someone was trying to take it from him. He killed his beloved wife Mariamne, his uncles, sons, brothers, and hundreds of other Jews whom he suspected of trying to take his throne. Herod immediately questioned the magi about the star. He sent them to search diligently for the child and then come tell him where he was, “that he might go and worship him.” He wanted to find out how old this new “king” was. Of course, Herod did

not want to worship the king of Israel—he wanted to kill him. The magi left Herod and found the star actually moving before them directing them toward Bethlehem; coming to rest over the very house in which Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were now staying. The wise men worshiped Jesus in a house—not in the stable. Some 80 days transpired between the birth of Jesus in the manger and the wise-men finding him in the house. Jesus was taken to Jerusalem to be circumcised before the magi found him in a house in Bethlehem (Lk. 2:21-38). Were the gifts magi presented tokens of their belief? Perhaps! Maybe simply the “politically correct” thing to do! The book of Esther tells us that many of the Persians became believers of the Jewish religion in her day (Esther 8:15). God warned the wise-men in a dream not to return to Herod, so they departed, returning to their own country. They disappear from the pages of history as suddenly and mysteriously as they entered. They had “intriguing” things to tell their contemporaries when they got back to Persia!

The “slaughter of the innocents” in Bethlehem is not mentioned in any other historical record—not even in Josephus! Slaughter of infants, however, was a common practice in that time. Heathen peoples often left unwanted children out to die of exposure or to be killed by wild animals. Bethlehem was an obscure village of no particular interest to Roman or Jewish politicians and historians of that day. It was such a small village the number of male children in it under 2 years of age would not be many. If Josephus knew of the incident, he would have trepidations about mentioning it because he might have to explain Jewish Messianic hopes to his Roman benefactors. It is not a pretty thing to think about. But, then, those who oppose God and his truth are never really nice about it. If they cannot oppose it subtly, they will do it by savagery, because they have joined the forces of the devil who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning! Matthew says the experiences of the Jewish mothers as they watched their infants being slaughtered in Bethlehem was a fulfillment of the experiences of Jewish mothers in Jeremiah’s day as they watched their children being slaughtered in connection with the Babylonian captivity of the Jews (Jer. 31:15-34). Read Jeremiah’s full prophecy. He seems to be saying there will be a future consolation out of such slaughter. HOW COULD THAT BE? The whole context of Jeremiah 31:15-34 is Messianic and Matthew’s use of “Rachel weeping” cannot be understood without knowing the whole context of Jeremiah! Rachel was the mother of Benjamin and Joseph, thus of Ephraim (a synonym for Israel). Rachel was regarded as the “mother” of Israel, and in a broader sense, symbolizes all the mothers of the entire nation who lost sons through Israel’s enemies. In Jer. 31:16-17 God wipes away the tears from the cheek of the weeping Rachel. Jeremiah assures the “mother” of Israel that there will be a reward for her “weeping.” Rachel is not weeping in vain. Israel would one day return to its homeland from its exile to Babylon. Jeremiah’s prophecy has two fulfillment’s—the earliest one was the return from exile—the ultimate one was the coming of the Messiah. Prospects of a return at the time of the exile from a human perspective were exceedingly dismal and terrible, but there was always hope for Israel. One of the very interesting phrases in this context is verse 22, “For the Lord has created a new thing on the earth: a woman protects (or “surrounds”) a man.” Many scholars believe this to be a prophecy of the virgin conception and birth of the Messiah. Indubitably, Jer. 31:31-34 is Messianic! Hebrews 8:8-13 confirms it! It is a prophecy of the New Covenant—the ultimate hope for true Israel! What Matthew is really saying when he quotes Jeremiah’s prophecy about Rachel is that out of this terrible tragedy at Bethlehem

has come the Ultimate Hope of Israel—the Messiah, the New Covenant! If “Rachel-the mother-of-Israel” wept when the promises of God seemed doomed at the Babylonian captivity, how much more would she do so now that the Messiah himself is endangered and must flee to Egypt, and these innocent babies be slaughtered. “Mother” Israel would weep when her enemy, Herod (a descendant of Esau) killed her sons in Bethlehem, but (as in the return from the captivity) the Messiah (Israel—see Gal. 3:16) would be saved to bring the “Consolation” of God to the nation in a New Covenant, and with “him” final and complete forgiveness of sins.

Jesus was born about the last week of December, 5 B.C. (about 3-4 months before Herod died), or January 4 B.C. Herod died at Jericho about the first week of April, 4 B.C. Jesus was an infant when he returned from Egypt. God sent one of his angels to Joseph so he would be certain of what he was to do. The angel gave no specific place of settlement for Joseph and his family—just “the land of Israel.” (Matt. 2:19). Apparently Joseph decided first to settle in Bethlehem, in Judea, the ancestral home. But Archelaus (son of Herod the Great—brother of Herod Antipas) was newly appointed ruler in Judea and he was as cruel as his father. He had just recently killed 3000 Jews to suppress tax-riot at Passover. So, God warned Joseph in a dream against settling in Judea, and Joseph decided to return to Nazareth, where he and Mary had been living prior to Jesus’ birth (Lk. 1:26ff). This, says Matthew (2:23), was also a fulfillment of OT prophecy. There is no one, specific, OT prophet who promises that the Messiah would be called the “Nazarene.” Matthew uses the plural, “prophets,” to draw attention to several prophets which predict that the Messiah would be despised, rejected, and shunned (Isa. 52:14; 53:3; Psa. 22:6-8; Dan. 9:24-27). The whole land of Galilee was held in contempt by the orthodox Jews of Judea (Isa. 9:1; Jn. 7:41,52; Mk. 14:70; Lk. 22:59). What better place to be brought up so as to be rejected and despised, than Nazareth of Galilee (Jn. 1:45-46; Acts. 24:5).

THERE IS NO INDICATION IN THE SCRIPTURES ANYWHERE THAT FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANS CELEBRATED (AS A “SPECIAL” DAY) THE BIRTH OF JESUS! Morris Harris, syndicated columnist, The Joplin Globe, December 22, 1970: “It wasn’t until A.D. 354 that Bishop Liberius of Rome decreed the first general celebration of Christ’s birth...December 25th was arbitrarily picked, since the exact date of His birth was unknown...Some scholars believe December 25 was chosen because it coincided with the pagan festival of Winter Solstice, commonly called Saturnalia. Observing the Christ Child’s birth then would have allowed Christians to celebrate during a festival period when commercial and business enterprises were shut down. (How times have changed!). According to tradition, Saturnalia was a swinging time of great frivolity, feasting, exchanging of gifts and general whoopee-making often accompanied by debauchery and an attitude of license. As has often happened in the history of world civilizations much of the pagan merrymaking was absorbed into the Christian holiday consciously and unconsciously. By the Middle Ages, paganism was so rampant in the popular observance of Christmas that church leaders opposed the holiday and unleashed a series of reforms intended to reintroduce Christ-honoring....Biblical purists who want to get back to the birthday of Christ as expressed in the New Testament would do well to remember the opening lines of this piece: Scripture

says nothing explicit—nor did the early Church Fathers—about memorializing Christ’s birth....They will find, however, ample evidence that Christians are to remember the Lord’s death....” INDEED, MANY TRAPPINGS OF PAGANISM HAS BEEN ATTACHED TO “CHRISTMAS”—the tree, gift-giving to one another, gluttony, commercialization, songs that have nothing to do with the birth of Christ, and the most pagan of all—Santa Claus. However, a scripturally-focused celebration of the birth of Christ will honor him. As Morris Harris says at the end of his column: “Christmas marks the birth of an individual whose teachings message and mission have proved to be the most influential of recorded time. When that birth is seen from the perspective of Christ’s death, resurrection and coming again—as scripture enjoins—the celebration of Christmas can take on a startling significance. For bound up in that perception is the profound mystery of the Incarnation.”

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 3:1- 4:25

The parents of John the Immerser were both of the tribe of Aaron (Lk. 1:5). His birth was predicted by Isaiah and Malachi (Isa. 40:3 & Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6) 700 years before he was born. John was a unique, only-one-of-a-kind figure and prophet of God. He was “in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel” (Lk. 1:80). He stayed in the hills of Judea where his parents lived until he was about 30 and began preaching (he was 6 months older than his kinsman Jesus). Wilderness does not necessarily mean he was thrust out into the “bad lands” when just a baby, there to grow up all by himself. “Wilderness” in Biblical metaphor means “an uninhabited place.” His manner of life was one of rugged, raw courage and highly disciplined, yet sincerely humble and self-effacing (the last being the most significant virtue as to why God chose him to be the “forerunner” of the Messiah). He wore an itchy, thick camel’s-hair garment with a wide, stiff belt; he ate grasshoppers (locusts) and wild honey; he drank no wine at all; he “cried” (Greek, boao, bellow-like-an-ox) with a bull-like voice; he preached to all who would listen and gave no quarter to the rich and powerful in telling them the truth. John always kept Jesus as the Pre-eminent One (“mightier than I”). John had a tremendous following of loyal disciples who would argue for his popularity and his way of doing things (Jn. 3:25). But John rebuked his own disciples saying “He (Christ) must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn. 3:30). John had many people of influence and authority ask him if he were the Christ (Jn. 1:19-28) or if he were Elijah, or if he were The Prophet. He could have claimed some glory, if he had been of that mind, but he always exalted Christ. His statements about Jesus were: (a) mightier than I; (b) one whose sandal thongs I am not worthy to untie; (c) one who ranks before me; (d) the bridegroom; (e) the Son of God; (f) the Lamb of God; (g) the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire. John is a classic example of Jesus’s promise—whoever humbles himself will be exalted by God. Great numbers of those who heard John preach repented of their sins and submitted to his baptism (immersion) as a command of God (Lk. 7:24-30; Jn. 1:35ff; Acts 18:24ff; 19:1ff; Jn. 3:22—4:3; Lk. 3:15; Jn. 1:19-28). Jesus said of John the Immerser, “Among those born of women there is not a greater one than John the Immerser” (Matt. 11:11). **THIS IS WHY GOD SENT JOHN THE IMMERSER TO PRECEDE CHRIST.**

John was a supernaturally-commissioned, God-sent, link between the Old Covenant and the New. His ministry was to announce the imminent abrogation of the Law and the prophets because they were to be fulfilled at the institution of the “kingdom of God.” That “kingdom” was very near, he preached, for the King had arrived on the scene. In fact, John was a parenthetical dispensation all by himself between the Old and the New (Lk. 16:16). His message, “Repent and be immersed for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3) was newer than the Old, but not quite the completion that the New would bring. **JOHN’S COMMAND TO BE IMMERSERED FOR REMISSION OF SINS CLEARLY SIGNIFIED THE END OF ANIMAL SACRIFICES AND HARVEST OFFERINGS FOR ATONEMENT OF SIN!** What he preached was authoritative, sent from God (Jn. 1:6ff). He was to “prepare” Israel to

(repent) turn away from the Old system to the New Person. They must get ready to turn from the type and shadow to the reality—Jesus Christ. His immersion was authoritative and valid until God transferred the authority to the Son (Matt. 28:18-20). After the Son had completed or fulfilled the First Covenant, New Covenant terms were his to dictate. Jesus poured out his Spirit on men who announced that after Pentecost, immersion for forgiveness must be ever afterward in Jesus' name—under Jesus' Lordship. But from the day of John's preaching until Pentecost, John's immersion was valid, and even Jesus submitted to it in order to please God in his fleshly relationship. John's baptism could not have originated from any "Jewish proselyte baptism." History has no record of "Jewish proselyte baptism" prior to John the Baptist!—nothing before the second century A.D.! The OT has only one word that would resemble NT immersion. All the other words in the Hebrew OT have to do with "washings." The following Hebrew words all mean to wash in religious ceremonies: (a) kavas "to wash, usually connected with washing of garments," Ex. 19:10; Lev. 6:27; 22:25,28,40; 17:15; Num. 8:7; Jer. 4:14, etc. usually connected with washing of the body, Ex. 29:4; 30:19-21; (b) rachatz, "to wash, usually connected with washing of the body or the hands," Ex. 29:4; 30:19-21; or the hands, Deut. 21:6; or of sacrifices, Ex. 29:17, or sometimes translated "bathe, cleanse" (cf. also Gen. 18:4; Ex. 2:5; Lev. 8:6; Isa. 1:16; (c) shataph, "to flood, overflow, pour copiously, 1 Kings 22:38—washing Ahab's chariot; Job 14:19; Ezek. 16:9; duach, "to cast off; purge from impurity" 2 Chron. 4:6; Ezek. 40:38; Isa. 4:4, etc; (d) the Hebrew word taval is the ONLY specific word meaning immerse, dip, submerge; taval ALONE means dip, submerge, immerse, Ex. 12:22; Lev. 4:6; 9:9; 11:32; 14:6,51; Num. 19:28; Deut. 33:24; Josh. 3:15; 1 Sam. 14:27; 2 Kings 5:14; Ruth 2:14; Ps. 68:23; Isa. 21:4. The Greek word baptizo, is used in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew OT) ONLY ONCE for the Hebrew taval and that is in 2 Kings 5:14. The Greek word baptizo appears in only one other place in the Septuagint (i.e., LXX) and that is in Isaiah 21:4 and there it is a translation of the Hebrew word bi'thatheniy, translated into English, "overwhelm, flood." A derivative of bapto, is used in the other references for taval. The Greek word baptizo appears only twice in the Hebrew Apocrypha (in Judith 12:7; Sirach 34:25) and not in connection with any "proselyte baptism." There is a Hebrew word for pour (sometimes translated, "sprinkle") and it is zaraq, the Septuagint translates it proscheo, "pour forth", Ex. 24:6,8; Lev. 1:5,11; 3:2,8,13; 2 Chron. 29:22; Ezek. 36:25. There is a Hebrew word for "sprinkle" and it is nazah, which the Septuagint renders hrantizo, Lev. 4:6,17; 5:9; 16:14,15,19; 14:7,51; Num. 8:7; 19:21; Isa. 52:51, etc.). Jewish proselyte baptism (immersion) is not mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament, the Jewish Apocrypha, the New Testament, Josephus, Philo, Jewish Targums, or the Mishna. None of the early Christian writers such as Barnabas, Justin Martyr or Tertullian, all of whom discussed both Jews and Christian baptism, mention Jewish proselyte baptism! John's baptism (immersion) could not have come from the Essenes (Qumranians): (a) the "water of impurity" used by the Qumranians (1QS 3:4-9) was not an initiatory rite but was reserved for practice of cleansing for those already in the "covenant"; (b) there really is no textual proof from the Dead Sea Scrolls that these "washings" of the Qumranians were by immersion (see Amazing Dead Sea Scrolls, by William LaSor, pub. Moody Press, pp. 78, 205); (c) Josephus in his Wars, II:8:5 said, "They (Essenes) assemble themselves together...into one place, and when they have clothed themselves in white veils, they then bathe their bodies in cold water..."; (d) Charles F. Pfeiffer in his book, The Dead Sea Scrolls

and the Bible, Baker, pp. 55 & 99, wrote, “The Qumran water purifications have more in common with the ‘washing of hands’ in Matthew 15 than they do with Christian baptism.” The Scriptures say John’s immersion came directly from God by revelation (Lk. 1:13-17; 1:76-79; 3:2; Jn. 1:33). The multitudes believed it came from God (Matt. 21:23-27). The Jewish rulers considered it something different than anything then being practiced religiously, and something that only Elijah, or the Messiah, would have the authority to institute (Jn. 1:24-28). Even Jesus, through his disciples, practiced the pre-Christian baptism of John (Jn. 3:26-27; 4:1-2). **JOHN’S IMMERSION CAME FROM GOD BY DIVINE REVELATION. IT WAS EFFICACIOUS AS AN EXPRESSION OF REPENTANCE AND FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS UNTIL JESUS COMMANDED ALL MEN TO BE IMMERSED IN HIS (JESUS’) NAME!**

Extra note: Did John the Immerser mean (Matt. 3:11-12; Mk. 1:7-8; Lk. 3:16-17) that the Messiah was going to immerse every believer in the Holy Spirit? (a) the context does not demand such an interpretation—we do not know who the “you” is in either the case of the Holy Spirit or fire; (b) it apparently does not mean that Christ will baptize everyone in fire (from the rest of the scriptures); (c) therefore it does not mean he will necessarily baptize everyone in the Holy Spirit; (d) it is altogether possible that he simply means some (and some of the Lord’s future apostles were undoubtedly in that audience). John’s primary concern here is to show how much power the Messiah will exercise in comparison to what he (John) was then doing. We must look elsewhere for the answer to our question about John’s statement of baptism in the Holy Spirit. What JB is really saying is, “I am not the Messiah—you think I have come from God—wait until the One coming after me shows his power and authority!” JB was merely pointing the people away from himself to the One who was to have absolute allegiance—not giving a doctrinal dissertation on the baptism of the Holy Spirit! There are only four distinct references to the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” (a) Matt. 3:11 and parallels; (b) Jn. 1:33; (c) Acts 1:5 (Acts 2:1-21 is the stated fulfillment of this); (e) the experience of Cornelius and his household (Acts 11:15-17)—this lone event upon Gentiles seems to indicate the phrase “all flesh” of Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17 was intended as representative (i.e., the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon some Jews and some Gentiles signified God was opening the kingdom to the whole world). All the specific supernatural powers exercised by the apostles were never exercised by any others. For this reason, some think Cornelius did not receive the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” but only a miraculous “gift,” momentarily, in order to signify not to empower. Peter does say that the Holy Spirit “fell on them just as on us (apostles) at the beginning.” But the Holy Spirit could fall on people and give them certain gifts without “immersing” them to the same extent he did the apostles. Anyone, anywhere, anytime can select some “religious” or emotional experience and call it the “baptism of the Holy Spirit”—but if we are going to call Bible things by Bible names **THERE ARE ONLY TWO SUCH EXPERIENCES CALLED THE “BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT—THE APOSTLES ON PENTECOST AND CORNELIUS—AND ONE OF THOSE IS LESS SPECIFIC THAN THE OTHER!**

Jesus was baptized when he was about 30 years of age, some 40 days before his first public Passover in John 2, sometime in December A.D. 26 or January A.D. 27; the location of his baptism was probably Bethabara (a.k.a. "Bethany beyond the Jordan"—Jn. 1:28) due west of Jericho, on the eastern bank of the Jordan—60-70 miles south of his home in Nazareth. He walked that distance purposely to be baptized of John, not because he had sins to be forgiven, but:

Jesus was baptized in John's baptism in order to acquiesce to the will of God. As Jesus himself put it "...thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." He came into the world as a human so as to live a perfectly sinless life as a human and thus earn righteousness for humanity—he must do whatever righteous commandments God has for humans (Phil. 2:8). Jesus was, humanly speaking, an Israelite. To have refused John's baptism would have been to disobey God. Matthew used the Greek word *prepon*, in reporting Jesus' statement. English versions translate it "suffereth, fitting." Jesus said, "Thus (because God commanded it) it is proper..." and was explicit that no one can fulfill righteousness if one disobeys the plain command of God. Jesus always did what was pleasing to the Father (Jn. 8:29)...He always did the Father's commandments (Jn. 15:10)...His "food" was to do the will of the Father (Jn. 4:34). How could John introduce Jesus as the "Anointed One of God" if Jesus had refused to be baptized when God had commanded it of all Israelites?

Jesus submitted to John's baptism to associate himself with humanity. He was "made like his brethren in every respect" (Heb. 2:14-18). "...taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men...being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death..." (Phil. 2:6-8). He could not have become the author of man's salvation without being baptized, for "although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect (complete) he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him..." Heb. 5:8-9. God commanded human beings to be baptized; Jesus was a human being (as well as a Divine Being); he had to be baptized, if he wanted to obey God as a human. That is what Jesus wanted to do by his own choice! He wanted to obey God as a man—a perfectly obedient man—so he could qualify to make atonement for those who haven't been perfectly obedient—"Lo, I have come to do thy will..." (Heb. 10:5-10)

Jesus went to be baptized by John to authenticate his Person, his mission and his message. Paul wrote to Timothy, "He (the Christ) was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit..." 1 Tim. 3:16. The Holy Spirit bore witness that Jesus was the Anointed One of God when Jesus was baptized. John did not know, with certainty, who the Messiah was. John said that the very reason he was sent to baptize was to reveal to Israel who the Messiah was (Jn. 1:31-34). Jesus had to be baptized by John to have the divine certification from heaven (the Holy Spirit in the bodily form of a dove) that he was the Messiah. John was told what the divinely certifying sign would be, so he could claim eyewitness credibility (Lk. 3:22). A voice from heaven also authenticated Jesus as the Messiah at his baptism, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

John the Baptist persuaded great multitudes of people to repent of their sins and prepare themselves for the coming Messianic kingdom. He showed the nation of Israel in a vivid, unmistakable manner (by preaching baptism for remission of sins) that the Old Covenant was to be fulfilled by the Messiah. He exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Lk.7:30) and thus caused many people to reject their way of life. John the Baptist caused multitudes to see that the “kingdom of God” which their Old Testament prophets had predicted had arrived, thus confirming the faithfulness of God. John’s preaching gathered to him some of the men who would later become “pillars” of Jesus’ band of “apostles.” John prepared the Messiah’s audience with the revelation from God that salvation was by grace, through faith, and not by genetic (Jewish) inheritance. AND MOST IMPORTANT, JOHN INTRODUCED AND AUTHENTICATED, THE PERSON, JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH, AS THE MESSIAH OF GOD! Has it startled you in these first 3 chapters of Matthew how much time and energy God spent in preparing for the Messiah! Patience and preparation are God-like! Too much Christianity today is done impatiently and with almost complete disregard for preparation. God is not the author of haphazardness or fretfulness. God does not rush things. Why? Because God does not evaluate success or accomplishment as man does. God is interested primarily in the quality and endurance of the product. The mission and message and person of John the Baptist confirms that!

Two Greek words are usually translated, “temptation”---- peirasmos (“to try, test, prove, assay,” the most often used word for “temptation”)—and skandalon (sometimes translated, “offence or stumbling-block” it means, “bait, trap, snare”). The word peirasmos is used of Jesus’ temptations (Matt. 4:1; Lk. 4:1). Temptation defined in the dictionary: “The enticement of a person to commit sin by the prospect of some seeming pleasure or advantage.” Being the object of such “enticement” is one of the common denominators of being human, because the wickedly spiteful Devil (Satan) is completely committed to destroying all men by luring them into sin. A shrewd man once said, “The man who has no problem with temptation is the man who always yields!” Age, social status, spiritual level of maturity, economic circumstances or education have no bearing on whether or not we will be tempted! It may come in a rush, trying to overpower us—or it may come seductively, discreetly, slithering through the grass like a serpent—BUT IT COMES—TO EVERYONE—EVERY DAY! Temptation is almost always camouflaged. Evil artfully masquerades as good. Evil appropriates the highest levels of life (sex, food, possessiveness, even religious nature) as its vehicles of expression. Satan’s basic stratagem is to attack our human limitations—i.e., the needs of the flesh; aspirations of the ego (Gen. 3:6; 1 Jn. 2:15). Temptation always distorts reality (distorts the nature of God, Gen. 3:1-5); it is more intense when we are near that which tempts us (David with Bathsheba; 2 Tim. 2:22); it is more effective when we have no fellowship with other believers (1 Cor. 12:14ff); it often comes at a time of great spiritual experience of triumph (Jesus in the wilderness right after his baptism); temptation is always based on the assumption that God’s Word is subject to our judgment—Jer. 5:12; Amos 9:10; and the more we contemplate that which tempts us, the more apt we are to fall—temptation allowed to germinate, grows like a cancer until sin is acted out (Jas. 1:12-15). God does not do the tempting, but he allows human beings to be “tempted” in order to “perfect” them (bring them to the goal of righteousness). IT IS GOD’S WAY OF SPIRITUALLY

STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO CALL UPON HIM. TEMPTATION IS SURE TO COME (Mt. 18:7; Lk. 17:1). It presents people with choices—the choices are not forced upon anyone, and no one has to succumb to them. God will not allow anyone to be tempted beyond their strength to overcome, and God will provide the way of escape when it comes (1 Cor. 10:13). Man's part is to exercise self-control (Gr. engkrateia, from kratos, "strength"—controlling the power of the will with the help of the Holy Spirit) and guard against falling into the temptation when it comes (Acts 24:25; 1 Cor. 7:5,9; 9:25 Gal. 5:23; Titus 1:8; 2:2; 2 Pet. 1:6). "The love of Christ controls us" (2 Cor. 5:14)

TEMPTATION MOST OFTEN COMES WHEN WE ARE ALONE. Jesus was alone in the wilderness—no one was watching! Not one of Jesus' temptations had to do with things evil in themselves since the object of his temptation in each case was harmless—the wrong was in the means suggested how the objects were to be used. Satan entices humans to prostitute the divine capacities and powers God has given them for selfish, egotistical, carnal purposes. Satan will take advantage of our humanness in (a) the desire to preserve life (food, clothing, shelter, etc.); (b) the procreating desire (sex, care for family, etc.); (c) social desires (gregariousness, companionship, approval, self-assertion, pride, ambition, competition); (d) desire to submit (to imitate heroes, conform to law, regard higher powers with respect); (e) acquisitive desires (joy of ownership); (f) creative desires (pleasure of being a power or cause capable of creating, or destroying); (g) aesthetic desires (enjoyment of the beautiful and desire to possess it). NONE OF THESE ARE WRONG IN THEMSELVES—GOD CREATED US WITH EVERY ONE OF THEM, YET THEY ARE THE TARGET OF SATAN'S KEENEST TEMPTATIONS. God sent Jesus to the wilderness to fast for 40 days and nights. Jesus rejected Satan's temptation to make bread not because it is essentially wrong to provide for one's bodily needs—BUT BECAUSE TO OBEY GOD IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR ETERNAL LIFE—TO KEEP THE PHYSICAL BODY ALIVE IS NOT! If we are faced with the choice of a life compromised by disobedience to God, or a death for righteously obeying God, we must take the latter option.

Notice Jesus did not seek to change his circumstances! He dealt with the temptation exactly as it came to him in that circumstance. It is wrong to think were the circumstances different when tempted that, the response would have been better. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR LETTING US BE TEMPTED OR TESTED IS TO PRODUCE PEOPLE WHO WILL DO HIS WILL UNDER ANY AND ALL CIRCUMSTANCES. Jesus' answer to every temptation was, "It is written...." THE PRECEPTS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE BIBLE ARE THE ONLY RESISTANCE TO THE DEVIL'S "BAIT," BECAUSE THE WORD OF GOD IS THE ONLY ABSOLUTE HUMANS HAVE IN THIS WORLD! God has given the Bible as a revelation of the commandments and principles which will guide us in EVERY decision. It is our responsibility to know these and practice them. God is not going to extricate us from temptations by miraculously making them disappear in a puff of smoke. He will not send his Holy Spirit and lead us in paths of righteousness against our will. He will not overpower our right and necessity to choose. There are no shortcuts to resisting temptation. RESISTING TEMPTATION, ESCAPING THE CORRUPTION THAT IS IN THE WORLD, MEANS STANDING ONE'S GROUND ON THE PROMISES OF GOD (2 Pet. 1:4—read it!). Most of

those promises are not yet realized—they are in the future. But we must shun the “bait” of the visible in favor of our expectations and hopes for the invisible (Heb. 11:24-27—READ IT). Resisting temptation is not easy—God never promised it would be! One conquers the body, by “subduing it” (1 Cor. 9:27)—by “putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and making no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:16-18)—BY OBEYING GOD’S WORD —“...it is written.” People fall into temptation and sin either because they do not know what God’s word says, or because they know what God’s word says, but don’t believe it! IT’S AS SIMPLE AS THAT! Jesus proved, in the flesh, that the flesh does not have to be given over to sin! (Rom. 8:3-8).

Matthew 4:12-22 indicates Jesus faced the temptation to be discouraged and to complain. It’s understandable. This text, on the surface, doesn’t seem to indicate it, but one must understand what has transpired in his ministry between the devil’s frontal attack in the wilderness and this text! (a) Jesus got his first disciples (Jn. 1:35-51) but they followed him hesitantly, questioningly, then went home; (b) Jesus traveled to Cana of Galilee, where his mother, misunderstanding his mission (even after all the signs she had), tried to get him to compromise his motives (Jn. 2:1-12); (c) then he traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover and found the temple being perverted by the very priesthood supposed to keep it holy (Jn. 2:13-22); (d) Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews, a teacher of God’s word, came to him with a tragic misunderstanding of the kingdom of God and citizenship in it (Jn. 3:1-21); (e) then Jesus found some disciples of John the Baptist expressing jealousy that Jesus was baptizing more disciples than JB (Jn. 3:22—4:2); (f) departing and going through Samaria, Jesus found a woman who wanted to sidestep her personal needs and argue with him about theological opinions—however, this experience turned out victorious and uplifting; (g) then he was welcomed into Galilee, Jn. 4:43-45, because of the things they had heard he had done in Judea (miracles), and he had another positive, encouraging experience with the nobleman’s son at Capernaum (Jn. 4:46-54)—but the encouraging experiences were brief; (h) for when he returned to his boyhood home of Nazareth and preached in the synagogue, he found the audience totally opposing him, threatening to kill him (Lk. 4:16-30) and apparently those “disciples” following, left him and went back, again, to their homes. It is no wonder this text in Matt. 4:12-17 describes Galilee as a place where “people sat in darkness, in the region of shadow and death.” They were “Gentile-fleshly” oriented. For the most part they were enamored of worldliness. They were wanting a worldly kingdom. They expected him to be a worldly Messiah. It was a gloomy experience for Jesus. It was enough to discourage most human beings. He could have justly complained, thrown up his hands in disgust, and slain them all for their unbelief (some of his disciples later wanted to do that with the Samaritans). BUT JESUS DID NOT COMPLAIN. HE DID NOT SLAY, EVEN THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE SLAIN HIM. HE JUST WENT RIGHT ON PREACHING, “REPENT FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND.” MATT. 4:17—FOR HE CAME NOT TO CONDEMN THE WORLD, THE FIRST TIME, BUT TO SAVE IT! The one bright spot in this first Galilean ministry is when the “fishermen” left their nets and followed him. But why didn’t they make the same commitment the first time (Jn. 1:39)? They should have! Even this second time, they followed him with misconceived, carnal ideas. Most “leaders” would have been sorely tempted to become impatient with these halting, hesitating, hard-headed disciples. But

Jesus did not become impatient, nor did he complain. He called imperfect men to share in his work of preaching the gospel because that is the only kind of men there are. Their understanding was lacking; their motives may have left considerable to be desired; BUT THEY WERE WILLING TO LEARN, and that, after all, is what a disciple is—A LEARNER. JESUS IS NEVER IMPATIENT WITH A “LEARNER”—NEITHER MUST WE BE!

In Matt. 4:23-25 we learn that Jesus taught—teaching is giving oneself; we learn that Jesus preached—preaching is even more a giving of oneself; we learn that Jesus ministered—he healed, gave aid to those who needed physical help, was compassionate—and what did he get in return?—GRASPING FOR THE PHYSICAL. Jesus’ fame spread. But what was he famous for? Not teaching, not preaching, BUT HEALING! They brought him all the sick—followed him in great crowds all over Palestine—for his healing. This kind of carnal-minded grasping after the physical plagued the ministry of Jesus constantly. The classic example is the Feeding of the 5000! Read it! Almost every time Jesus healed or fed people he had great multitudes clamoring—not for teaching, not for his words, but for their own healing or feeding. Even his own disciples would later say, “Lord we have left all and followed you— what then shall we have?” Wouldn’t that tempt Jesus to be cynical, contemptuous, and wanting to retaliate? Sure! But he never succumbed to that temptation. Jesus was saddened, hurt and heart-broken (Matt. 23:37-39; Lk. 19:41) but he never gave up nor was he ever contemptuous. His magnificent, perfect love would not allow cynicism. It was even predicted that the Messiah would be tempted to become discouraged, despairing, cynical (Isa. 49:1-7; 50:4-9), BUT THE MESSIAH WAS GOING TO TRUST THE FATHER FOR HIS HONOR AND VINDICATION—AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT JESUS DID! God is not going to miraculously change people from grasping, greedy, insincere people so that we will always have those who want to and will concentrate on spiritual teaching. We will face the same provocations Jesus faced, and we must have the same love, compassion and patience he had, using the same source he used—GOD’S WORD AND GOD’S FAITHFULNESS TO KEEP HIS WORD!

Learn these lessons from this text: (a) if the “greatest born of women” was willing to crucify personal ambition and point every one to Christ it behooves all the rest of us to do so, too; (b) God wants spiritual children—if he wanted “genetic” children he could make them out of the stones—spiritual son-ship depends on the choices of belief or unbelief (c) call Bible things by Bible names—don’t be fooled by the confusion of modern error about the “baptism of the Holy Spirit”; (d) John, and all the rest of us, must let the world know that Jesus is not only Savior, but will be the Judge of all mankind; (e) when God commands, all human beings must obey—even Jesus obeyed and was baptized by John; (f) patience and preparation is a characteristic of God—and must be of all who want to be his children; (g) the devil is a real, living person—he is cunning and deceptive and attacks us at our most vulnerable—the flesh; (h) but he can be resisted—the only ground of resistance to the devil is the will of God as revealed in the Word of God; (i) all believers will face provocation for discouragement—Jesus did...the only defense against it is to believe what the Bible says about the faithfulness of God to keep his promises and ultimately vindicate those who trust him; (j) It is not wrong to be provoked or tempted—temptations are sure to come to all—but Jesus demonstrated in

the flesh that human beings do not have to yield to temptation—they can resist—Jesus did! As one ancient theologian said, “We cannot keep the birds from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from building nests in our hair!” **GOD HAS PROMISED TO MAKE AN ESCAPE FOR EVERY TEMPTATION—ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS FIND THAT ESCAPE AND USE IT!**

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 5:1-48

Matthew 5-6-7 is a record of what is called “The Sermon on the Mount.” It took place “on a mountain” (we don’t know which) about mid-way in Galilee, perhaps near what is traditionally called “The Horns of Hattin,” just west of the Sea of Galilee. Chronologically, it took place right after Jesus’ 2nd public Passover (John 5) near the beginning of his second year of ministry (April or May A.D. 27). His audience was (a) his twelve disciples; (b) multitudes of people following him (Matt. 4:25); (c) and probably some Pharisees and Sadducees.

This “Sermon” (a) defines the correct concept of the kingdom of God; (b) clarifies the nature of true righteousness; (c) exposes the essence of hypocrisy; (d) characterizes the ideal disciple of Jesus; (e) shows the effects of having the mind of Christ ruling in the human heart. All Christians are to be like this—not just preachers and elders; all Christians are to manifest, as completely as possible, all characteristics of this Sermon; non-Christians cannot really be like this, for this Sermon demands a new nature, and deals in attitudes, motives and values surrendered to Christ—not just outward actions. This “Sermon” makes absolute distinction between the Christian and non-Christian. The glory of the church is its difference from the “natural” mind. The attractiveness of the kingdom of God is in its non-worldliness—**AND THAT IS WHAT THIS SERMON IS ABOUT!** This sermon not only describes HOW Christians ought to live, it describes how Christians were MEANT to live. It is God’s ultimate goal for their character. Every teaching in this sermon may be found, and amplified, in the epistles (as a whole) of the NT. It is one grand elaboration of Christ’s “new commandment” (Jn. 13:34-35). In this Sermon we are shown HOW to love one another as he loves us.

Matthew, chapter 5, deals with MIND-SET for the Christian. In Christianity, the mind matters. All character is filtered through the mind, through the thinking process. All evaluation is done by the mind. As we think, so are we. Dallas Willard says all this so well in his book, *Divine Conspiracy*—“But dwelling in his word is not just intensive and continuous study of the Gospels....It is also putting them into practice. To dwell in his word we must know it: know what it is and what it means. But we really dwell in it by putting it into practice. Of course, we shall do so very imperfectly at first...Nevertheless, we can count on Jesus to meet us in our admittedly imperfect efforts to put his word into practice. Where his word is, there he is....He does not leave his words to stand alone in the world...And his loveliness and strength will certainly be personally revealed to those who will simply make the effort to do what his words indicate...we must be his students, and we must intend to lead others to be his students....you lead people to become disciples of Jesus by ravishing them with a vision of life in the kingdom of the heavens in the fellowship of Jesus. And you do this by proclaiming, manifesting, and teaching the kingdom to them in the manner learned from Jesus himself. You thereby change the belief system that governs their lives....to enable

people to become disciples we must change whatever it is in their actual belief system that bars confidence in Jesus as Master of the Universe...That is fundamental and must be taken as an unshakable conscious objective by any maker of disciples...When we bring people to believe differently, they really do become different...We frankly need to do much less of this managing of action, and especially with young people...We need to concentrate on changing the minds of those we would reach and serve. What they do will certainly follow, as Jesus well understood...there arises the misunderstanding that human life is not really governed by belief...This is a disastrous error...And the reason why clergy (preachers) and others have to invest so much effort into getting people to do things is that they are working against the actual beliefs of the people they are trying to lead...A major part of this important work (i.e., making disciples) is coming to understand what the people we are dealing with really do believe, and not pretending—often with them—that they believe what they don't believe at all...Your (belief) system is perfectly designed to produce the result you are getting...In practical matters, to teach people to do something is to bring them to the point where they actually do it on the appropriate occasions...However (our) emphasis all too often is on some point of behavior modification...This is helpful...but it does not reach the root of the human problem...Remember, to believe something is to act as if it is so...So, to drive home the crucial point, a great deal of what goes into “training (us) to do everything (Jesus) said” (i.e., Matthew 28:18-20) consists simply in bringing people to believe with their whole being the information they already have as a result of their initial confidence in Jesus...Jesus' disciples are those who have chosen to be with him to learn to be like him. All they have necessarily realized at the outset of their apprenticeship to him is, JESUS IS RIGHT...So they have him. They do not yet have it. Living as his apprentices, they are increasingly getting 'it.' Their cry is that of the desperate but honest man in the Gospels: 'Lord, I believe! Help thou my unbelief!' (Mark 9:24).” Willard, op.cit., pp. 296-318

The “poor in spirit” are those who are literally, “destitute, beggarly, pleading” for spirituality (the Greek phrase is *ptochoi to pneumati*, “poverty stricken in spirituality”). Those who “mourn” are those who are grief-stricken over their lack of spirituality (Greek, *penhountes*, “sorrowful, lamenting, in anguish”). Those who are “meek” are those who are controlled until they are gentle, disciplined, humbled (Greek, *praeis*, does not mean passiveness or inertia, it means teachable, responsive—it is a word used to describe a wild horse having become tamed and obedient to the bridle or yoke of its master). But the pivotal “beatitude” is “Blessed are those who are hunger and thirsting after righteousness.” All of the other beatitudes—those which come before and those which follow—“hang” upon this one. The Greek participles *peinontes kai dipsontes*, “hungering and thirsting” are both present-active participles meaning, “a continuing action.” They describe a constant longing for righteousness as something one must have or he will die. It is this awareness of a lack of spiritual food—a hunger for spirituality—that drives, rules and demands to be fed! What Jesus is saying here is that our character, our nature, our very soul must be so intensely and sharply pained by our need of true righteousness that we know we will die unless we get it. (Isa. 55:1-3; Amos 8:11-12; Psalms 42:1ff). God judges our character by that for which we

hunger and thirst, not necessarily by how much of it we have. This is the pivotal beatitude because it answers the previous begging for spirituality and mourning over its lack and willingness to be bridled to have it and it supplies the needs of the future beatitudes of maturation (i.e., mercifulness, purity of heart, peacemaking and rejoicing in persecution). The world scoffs and insists that happiness (i.e., “blessedness”) is the result of being filled with unrighteousness, or at best, self-righteousness. The Bible gives some classic examples of those who really did “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (the Prodigal Son, Lk. 15; David, Psa. 34:4-10; 51:1ff; 119:97-104; Paul, Phil. 3:7-11). Those who are “merciful” are those who give sympathy in acts of goodness—(Greek *eleemones*, “benevolent, charitable, humane”)—in the OT the Hebrew words for “merciful” are *chesed* and *rachemim*, both of which describe the ability to get right inside another person’s circumstances and mentality until we can see things with his eyes and think with his mind and feel with his feelings; when you suddenly find yourself in the position of having in your power one who has offended you, you will know whether you are merciful or not (Psa. 18:25; 103:1ff)—the Good Samaritan is the classic example of “mercifulness.” Those who are “pure in heart” are those who have their hearts cleansed of all that is not pure (Greek, *katharoi te kardia*, the English words, “catharsis” and “cardiac” come from these Greek words)—the “pure in heart” are those who have had a “catharsis of the cardia”—a heart free of impurities, genuine, unspoiled, unmixed, real. Those who are “peacemakers” are those who bring themselves and others to wholeness—the Hebrew word (which Jesus would have used here) is *shalom*, which means more than absence of conflict—it means integrity, abundance of spirituality, being reconciled to God and fellow humans (examples of peacemakers are Jonathan with Saul and David; Paul with Onesimus and Philemon; Paul with the churches to which he wrote, and, of course, Jesus atoning for mine and your sins and reconciling us to God). Rejoicing when persecuted should not have to be explained—MERELY DONE! The Greek word *dioxosin* is the word used in Matt. 5:11 for “persecuted” and it means, “pursued, expelled, accused, pressed, hounded, chased, harassed.” Persecution may take the form of verbal abuse (attack with words to intimidate); or physical abuse or social pressure; slander or character assassination. The reaction of a disciple of Jesus to persecution is (a) no retaliation; (b) no resentment or un-forgiveness or grudge; (c) rejoice and leap (Greek, *chairete kai angalliasathe*) with exceeding joy (Greek words describe what a winner of the Olympic races did). Why? Because in being persecuted for righteousness or Jesus’ sake, you join a select group of heroes of the faith who have already gone to their great (mega) reward in heaven—and because persecution for righteousness sake means you belong to the King of kings who was treated the same way!

These are the characteristics of a citizen of the kingdom of God. This is what a Christian thinks; these are his attitudes toward what constitutes blessedness (happiness). It should be apparent to anyone that these are attitudes directly contrary to the way the world looks at happiness or blessedness. The world certainly does not think one should rejoice when persecuted—the world thinks the persecuted should complain or retaliate. It is impossible for the unconverted, the non-Christian, to have this character or mind-set because it requires absolute, complete faith in God’s word. There is only one way to accept the mental outlook that one should rejoice rather than retaliate at persecution—and that is to

believe completely that Jesus means what he says, that he knows better than you, and put to practice what Jesus says here. In the “short haul” of this world’s experience, it would seem that the destitute of spirit never amount to anything, the meek never inherit anything, the merciful are fools, peacemaking is futile, and the persecuted for righteousness sake will never get even with their persecutors. Every human experience, feeling and rationalization is against the beatitudes. But there was one human experience which proves Jesus’ words to be real and true—JESUS’ HUMAN EXPERIENCE WHICH RESULTED IN HIS RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD WHICH VALIDATED EVERYTHING HE SAID!

Jesus does not say the citizen of the kingdom of God (the Christian) should become the “salt of the earth”—he says, “You (my disciple) ARE the “salt of the earth.” By having the character described in the beatitudes, the Christian IS the salt of the earth. Matthew 5:13 could even be translated, “You are salt for the earth...” The Christian is to be to the earth (its people) the “salt of God.” And what does the “salt of God” do? (a) it saves, seasons (i.e., flavors, spices, matures, ripens), and creates thirst; (b) a renowned archaeologist, E. P. Deatrick, in an article in may 1962 Biblical Archaeologist, points out that salt has always been used as a fertilizer around the world, and that the treatment with salt, if used in moderate amounts, so as not to burn vegetation, would greatly increase the productivity of certain soils. In classical history, Cato, Virgil, and Pliny all refer to the ability of salt to improve the productivity of the soil. This helps understand what Jesus meant in Luke 14:34-35 when he said, “Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill; men throw it away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear”; (c) salt also has a healing or antiseptic value; (d) salt is absolutely necessary for the human body to function properly—human beings would die instantly of carbon dioxide poisoning without it for salt is necessary to helping rid our bodies of that poisonous gas. Thus, metaphorically speaking, the world is doomed to an insipid, absurd, tasteless, pointless, innocuous death without Christians in it! The Christian whose character is formed by a worldly-minded viewpoint is useless—SUCH AN ONE HAS LOST HIS SALTNESS! Now, salt must always make CONTACT with whatever it is trying to salt. If you have some meat you wish to flavor or mature or preserve with salt, you don’t keep the two separated hoping something will happen to bring the two together. One cannot keep his business life, home life, recreational life separate from the character described in the Beatitudes—otherwise he is not “salting” the society in which he exists as “salt!” THE SALT OF THE EARTH SHOULD BE DOING ITS THING EVERYWHERE IT IS NEEDED—WHICH IS EVERYWHERE IN THIS SALT-LESS EARTH!

Christians are the only TRUE light (spiritual) the world has. They are the only way the world will be led to the Word of God, the Light of Life. People will not automatically or accidentally stumble into the light unless Christians disperse the light of God’s word so it may be seen! Light can’t be seen if it is obscured, hidden, turned off. It must be directed, applied, switched on. It must be shining. Light (a) sustains life and makes it grow; (b) exposes hidden things that might harm or hurt; (c) reveals reality as opposed to shadows and darkness; (d) guides to safety. Again, Jesus’ statement could be translated, “You are the light for the world.” If Christians are the light for the world, it is implied that every other claim

to be light is darkness—and the non-Christian world is groping in the darkness, living in unreality, and walking in danger! All light does is shine. It beats no drum, sounds no trumpet, does not seek or expect applause—IT IS JUST THERE—CONSTANTLY! There is no contradiction between letting your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify the Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16)—and—do not practice your piety before men to be seen by them (Matt. 6:1)—that should be apparent to anyone who is able to think! The difference is in the motive! IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, MOTIVE IS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE!—GET THAT RIGHT AND THE MENTALITY AND THE METHOD (PRACTICE) FALL INTO THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACES! These two mind-sets (salt and light for the world) should forever put to rest any lack of self-esteem or loss of identity feared about becoming a Christian! The Christian must understand that if God thinks highly enough of him to make him salt and light for the whole world, that the world must have him, that the world cannot get along without him, that should please him to know that he is INDISPENSABLE TO THE WORLD! The Christian does not have to pick out a special place to go in order to fulfill God's purpose in his life—HE IS THE SALT AND THE LIGHT FOR THE WORLD WHEREVER HE IS IN THIS WORLD AND HE IS NEVER WITHOUT PURPOSE—HIS IS THE HIGHEST PURPOSE—WHEREVER HE IS! Everything anyone hears from the world's viewpoint is contrary to Jesus' revelation here—the world says Christianity is obscurantist, obsolete, ineffective, irrelevant and that humanism, scientism, politics, economics are “salt and light for the world”----WRONG! JESUS SAID SO!

The Law of God is given to produce godly character. THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG OR INADEQUATE ABOUT THE LAW OF GOD IN ITSELF—WHAT WAS WRONG WAS REBELLIOUS, SPIRITUALLY-IMMATURE AND DISOBEDIENT MANKIND! Did you know there is a “law of Christ” spoken of in the NT? (see 1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2)! Law is simply an extension of God's character or nature (just like human laws or verbalizations are extensions of human character). But when men take God's law and impose upon it the human limitations of legalism or the anarchy of license, the law of God is made void in its purpose. Paul says in Romans 7:12-15, “So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good....It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.” The Law of God was given to produce the character of holiness in people. Had people believed God, and by faith, obeyed God's Law, they would have been holy—but they didn't. God intended by his Law to bring men to “perfection” (i.e., to the goal of full spirituality for which he made them. But no human could reach it. So the Son of God became man and “fulfilled” (filled-up-full”) the law of God in his humanity. “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do; sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:3-4) The Law and the Prophets (even in the OT—see Luke 24:25,44) teach that righteousness is given to men by the grace of God through the meritorious work of a coming “Suffering Servant” and man's faithful obedience to God's revealed will. Any one who teaches men otherwise has the wrong attitude toward God's Law.

Jesus points out here in this Sermon on the Mount that even the OT law was intended to deal primarily with the inner person (i.e., attitudes)---the outward only after the inner had been made righteous! See, for example, Leviticus 19:17; Num. 15:37-41. The Law of Moses teaches that a person is not truly pure until he never wishes or desires to rebel against the will of God. The carnal-mind is just the opposite---by the world's standards a person may wish and desire evil all he wants so long as he does not act it out overtly. The world takes God's law and says, "I do not like it, I cannot accept it in my heart, I don't want to be that kind of person, but if I refrain from doing what is prohibited, I will certainly be acceptable to God." NOT REALLY! The world says, "If I were not afraid of getting caught and punished for doing what is prohibited, I would do it, because that is the kind of person I really want to be. But as it is, I think I can fool my Creator by not doing what is prohibited no matter how I think about it or him." THAT IS ESSENTIALLY WHAT "UNBELIEF" IS---IT IS THE MOST INSIDIOUS KIND OF REBELLION AND AN AFFRONT TO THE OMNISCIENT CREATOR! Jesus is extremely serious about our attitude toward God's law---any of God's law (OT and NT). He makes it plain that nothing we have of the flesh (even our right hand or right eye) is as important as the right mind-set concerning God's law (Matt. 5:29-30). OF FIRST PRIORITY IN THE "KINGDOM-CITIZEN" MUST BE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD'S LAW. ADMITTEDLY, NO HUMAN (EXCEPT JESUS) HAS OR COULD FULFILL PERFECTLY GOD'S LAW---BUT ALL HUMANS CAN HAVE THE "RIGHT ATTITUDE" TOWARD IT---i.e., KNOW IT, LOVE IT, VALUE IT, WANT IT, MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO DO IT, AND THANK GOD DAILY THAT JESUS DID IT PERFECTLY FOR US!

NO! Jesus' statement in Matt. 5:31-32 was not given as a law concerning divorce which the church is to enforce automatically, universally, without qualifications given in other portions of the New Testament scriptures (i.e., 1 Cor. 7:1ff). Jesus' statement in Matt. 5:31-32 deals primarily, fundamentally, with attitude. That is plain from the fact that he says hidden lust is equally as sinful as overt adultery. The OT law said, "You shall not commit adultery," but it also said, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (Ex. 20:17). Many Jews, especially the Scribes and Pharisees, interpreted the law of Moses so that the prohibition against adultery meant the overt act of sexual intercourse only. BUT THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW PROHIBITS "COVETING" (DESIRING, WANTING, CRAVING) ANOTHER PERSON ILLICITLY FOR SEXUAL PURPOSES! Yes---God created human beings with the desire to have sexual intercourse, but God also put boundaries, limitations upon that desire which human beings, by self-control, have the capacity to obey (see 1 Cor. 7:1ff). Sexual intercourse must be only wanted and acted out within the parameters of God's revealed will which is within the marriage of one man to one woman, for so long as they shall both live (see Matt. 19:1ff). We will discuss the matter of marriage, divorce and remarriage at greater length in our lesson of Matthew, chapter 19. The OT did, because of the hardness of people's hearts, make provision for divorce in cases of sexual unfaithfulness (Matt. 19:1ff). Suffice to say here, this statement of Jesus (Matt. 5:27-32) about lust, adultery and divorce was never intended to be the last word on the subject. It was never intended that human beings should use it as a code of regimentation for all the problems, circumstances and difficulties of this whole problem. Jesus, in this context, is simply illustrating wrong attitudes toward God's law (specifically here in the matter of marriage and divorce). Men were saying

that as long as they did not commit the sexual act of adultery they could lust and have the desire whether they did the act or not. And they even took God's Law concerning divorce and made themselves a loophole by which they could satisfy their lust. The Talmud reverses the commandment against adultery, even permitting fornication with children (e.g., Gemara, Sanh.52b, see also Kerithoth 11a,b; Sanh. 55a; 55b;58b; Yeb. 57b; Sanh. 69a; 69b; yeb. 58a; 60b). But as we have seen from Ex. 20:17 the law forbade illicit lust in the heart as well as forbidding the illicit act itself. For extensive comments on marriage, divorce and remarriage, see First Corinthians, by Paul T. Butler, 1985, pub. College Press, Joplin, MO, chapter 7, pp. 118-147; for Jewish Talmudic "laws" concerning adultery and fornication, see, Israel, Our Duty...Our Dilemma, by Theodore W. Pike, 1984, Big Sky Press, Oregon City, OR, chapter 4, pp. 28-38

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 6:1-34

True righteousness, and happiness, according to Jesus in Matthew chapter 6 is trusting God and trying to do all he commands with a view to pleasing him only. The general principle is: **DO NOT DO YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS TO BE SEEN BY MEN—DO IT TO BE PLEASING TO GOD!** That does not contradict Matthew chapter 5 which says, “Let your light so shine that men may see your good works.....” because, “good works” are done to “glorify (i.e., give rank, weight, majesty) to the heavenly Father. **MOTIVE IS ALL IMPORTANT!** Human beings may deceive one another that they are selfless, but God sees the heart and knows whether they are or not. There is nothing we can do, think, or feel but what God is fully aware of the **MOTIVE** behind it. Pure motive has its own rewards—happiness and harmony with God and with self as well as praise from the Creator (“Well done, good and faithful servant....”). But there is no reward from God for those who seek it from men. Those who seek the praise and riches of this world do not want God’s praise and reward—therefore, God will not give it. The goals of the world and those of God are in opposition. Those who strive for worldly purposes (self) will receive it in some form or another—but they will lose the reward from God! **RELIGION BY HABIT IS DANGEROUS!** Man has a marvelous ability to do things by habit. This permits him to progress from one acquired skill to another without having to repeat each action consciously. But this very capacity to perform actions unconsciously is a menace to man’s sincerity in the area of personal relations with others and with God. When worship or religion becomes habitual, the mind can easily go elsewhere while the body automatically continues the external acts called “religion” (alms, prayer, communion, singing, etc.). Where there is a loss of conscious sincerity right motives are lost, and happiness disappears. When church “leaders” play the games of politics, success-syndrome, entertainment mania, stereotyping in traditions, craze to keep up with the denominations **THEY ARE TEACHING PEOPLE TO DO RELIGION IN ORDER TO BE SEEN BY MEN!**

The absolutely wrong way to give for charitable purposes is to do it to make sure men see and applaud! There is even a subtle way of saying you do not make show, in order to make a show! The right way to give is to respond to a need, secretly, being satisfied that God alone has seen and that is sufficient! If Jesus had not seen the extremely sacrificial gift of the widow, no one else would---but the widow was satisfied (and God would have been also). Would we stop giving to the Lord and helping others if what we did went unnoticed by some other human being? What is the real reason for giving? **WE MUST CONSTANTLY GUARD OUR MOTIVES IN THIS MATTER!** If our motive is right and others happen to know what we give—then God is satisfied and so should we be satisfied.

Jesus says we are not only to keep it secret from others, BUT ALSO FROM OURSELVES. Having done alms in secret we are not then to take an imaginary book and write it down in our memory for our own secret pleasure. We should not keep books of memory on our goodness at all. We should NOT REMEMBER ACTS OF KINDNESS WE HAVE DONE FOR OTHERS (Matt. 25:37-39). We should not try to keep spiritual records, even on ourselves, let alone on others. GOD KEEPS BETTER RECORDS THAN WE (Matt. 25)—GOD ALWAYS REMEMBERS! It may be alright for someone else to refer to one's liberality—Paul did with the Macedonians (2 Cor. 8-9), BUT THE CHRISTIAN HIMSELF IS TO TAKE CARE TO DEVISE WAYS TO AVOID DISPLAY! What a man does in secret reveals more about him than all his known, public acts could ever tell about him. Christians should give even when they are in “a severe test of affliction....and an extreme condition of poverty...liberally...according to their means....beyond their means...of their own free will....begging those in need to take what they give” (2 Cor. 8:1-4)—because Christians have already GIVEN THEMSELVES to the Lord! Civil government, by allowing income tax deductions for charitable giving, has put a “stumbling block” (a temptation) in the path of its citizenry—making it obligatory that citizens “keep books” on how much they give to charity. Only the very conscientious believer is able to “keep accurate books” on his income and his “out-go.”

Prayer is not to be restricted to formal, visible petitions in “orthodox” bodily positions (like standing or kneeling or lifting hands toward heaven). Remember, Jonah prayed (probably in a prone position, in the belly of the great fish—Hezekiah prayed while lying in his bed, with his face to the wall). PRAYER SHOULD BE DONE FOR THE MOST PART IN SECRET! Prayer is something done by the Christian ceaselessly. It is an attitude of life. Public praying, while not prohibited altogether, is vulnerable to the very thing Jesus warns against here—HYPOCRISY—praying in order to impress an audience of humans. Neither Jesus nor the apostles prayed OFTEN in public! Sin is extremely deceitful—it can creep into the very action of communing with God in prayer. We may even “slip away from people to pray” in order to be seen “slipping away to pray.” We must be very careful to guard our motives when we have our “retreats” and “24-hour-prayer-chains,” etc. DO NOT PRAY AS THE GENTILES—WITH VAIN REPETITIONS. Do not think prayer is a magic formula. Eloquence, length of prayer, repetition, KJV-language, or other trappings of such alleged prayer does not impress God. HE HEARS ONLY SINCERITY! Prayer has no power in itself. The power resides in God and his word and will. We should not think we can “wear God down” by much praying. Believers need to be faithful in their prayers—but God doesn't need wearing down. He is eagerly waiting to hear every sincere word we wish to say to him (Lk. 18:7-8). He has already promised to give us every thing we need (Matt. 7:7-12). BUT WE MUST HAVE THE RIGHT ATTITUDES AND MOTIVES OF HUMILITY, DEPENDENCE AND FAITH TO RECEIVE AND USE TO THE RIGHT PURPOSE WHAT OUR FATHER ALREADY WANTS TO GIVE US—SO THAT IS WHY WE MUST PRAY CEASELESSLY! So, you see, it is not how much, or where, or when, or in whose company WE PRAY----IT IS MOTIVE AND ATTITUDE THAT IS ALL IMPORTANT! Prayer (i.e. “Praise”) is not for God's needs! God has no self-image problem that requires our constant applause. PRAYER IS FOR US! IT CHANGES US. IT HUMBLER US. IT MAKES US CONSTANTLY AWARE OF

OUR DEPENDENCE ON HIM. IT PREPARES US TO RECEIVE THANKFULLY AND USE RIGHTEOUSLY WHAT HE GIVES US ANYWAY! Do we not realize God has blessed us with many things for which we NEVER specifically asked him? He makes his sun to shine on the just and the unjust alike—but only the just know what it is all about and how to use it. It is in praying, praising, worshiping God that God becomes real to us. Of course, God is real whether you or I ever worship him or not. Jesus came forth from the tomb alive whether we believe it or not. It is a fact of history and reality. BUT CHRIST'S PRESENCE AS A REALITY, AS AN INFLUENCE IN OUR LIVES, IS ONLY REAL AS WE OBEY HIM AND WORSHIP HIM!

The “Lord’s Prayer” or “Model Prayer” is ALWAYS a very good “model” for every Christian. (a) “Hallowed (or “Holy”) be Thy name”—means acknowledging the total sovereignty of God—ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY COMES FIRST IN ANY PRAYER TO HIM; (b) “Thy Kingdom come”...means praying that the sovereign rule of God will come in life of the one praying and all others for whom one prays—God’s kingdom (rule) is spiritual and we need to petition him that it be expanded and extended everywhere; (c) “Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven,”—WE’RE STILL PRAYING FOR GOD’S SOVEREIGN REIGN TO BE DONE ON EARTH (AMONG HUMAN BEINGS) TO THE EXTENT IT IS DONE IN HEAVEN!—and how is it done in heaven?—totally, absolutely, willingly, freely, lovingly and with great satisfaction. There is no compromising, no hedging on the will of God being done in heaven—HAVE WE THE COURAGE AND GRIT TO REALLY PRAY THIS? JESUS DID (Matt. 26:36-42; Jn. 12:27-28; Heb. 5:87-9). To pray for it, is to seek that it be done! (d) “Give us each day (as Luke 11:3 puts it) our daily bread”—this is a prayer to God (seeking, asking) stating that we are depending on him every day, each day at a time, for our food and other necessities of physical life—no anxiety about the future—no hoarding of earthly things (see Lk. 12:13-34); (e) “Forgive us....as we have forgiven others”....Now of course, we expect God to forgive us completely, perfectly, willingly, without reservation, and forget our trespasses against him—it is doubtful that we can ever reach perfection in any area of spirituality—BUT WE MUST PRAY ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS---We must WANT to forgive, we must make every conscious and unconscious effort possible to forgive—we are certainly not in the right ATTITUDE if we are consciously NOT forgiving others! It must be our aim in life to forgive and forget sins against us. We cannot be the kind of person that has to be begged to forgive. We don’t want God to be that way with us! We need to go around finding opportunities to forgive! FORGIVENESS OF OTHERS REQUIRES THAT WE BEAR THE OFFENSE OF THE OFFENDER AGAINST US!—just as Jesus did for us! (f) “Lead us not into temptation....” means we are petitioning God to deliver us from crises and situations that we, in our weaknesses are unable to survive (because God knows our weaknesses better than we do). God has already promised to do that (1 Cor. 10:13), BUT WE NEED THE ATTITUDE OF DEPENDING ON HIS PROMISE—SO PRAY TO THAT END!

The earliest Hebrew word in the OT translated “fast” is ‘innah and literally means, “afflict the soul” (Lev. 16:29, etc.) ‘innah occurs 96 times in the OT. So far as we know there is no original Mosaic command to abstain from food in connection with “afflicting the soul.” A

later Hebrew word is tzoom, but this word is not used for “fast” in the Bible until the book of Judges. tzoom apparently involved the abstinence from food. The Greek word in the NT is nesteuete. Jesus and the apostles neither commanded fasting nor prohibited it for Christians. Some Bible believers did fast—Christ, during his “temptations” Matt. 4; David, 2 Sam. 1:12; 12:16; Psa. 109:24; Ahab, 1 Kings 21:25-29; Jeremiah’s people, Jer. 36:9; Esther’s people, Esther 4:1-3; 4:16; Nehemiah, Neh. 1:4; and the early Christians, Acts 10:30-31; 13:3; 14:23; 2 Cor. 11:17. Fasting is abnegation, subjugation of the fleshly mentality in all its aspects in order to concentrate the mind and soul on the spiritual make-up of the person. CHRISTIAN HAPPINESS IS FOUND IN CONSTANT EXERCISE IN GODLINESS AND SPIRITUALITY THROUGH SELF-CONTROL. The Pharisees fasted mechanically, legalistically, hypocritically. Their attitude was the “quarter in the slot” mentality —“fast and God will give you some nice material gift in return.” This is similar to the “tithers always prosper materially” attitude. TITHERS DON’T ALWAYS PROSPER MATERIALLY! The moment a Christian says, “Because I do this, I get that,” it means he believes he is in control of the blessings of God and can manipulate God into giving him some selfish circumstance. THAT IS A WICKED MOTIVE! The Pharisees fasted so everyone could see how religious they were. They put on false faces, (Greek, skuthropoi) “sad, dejected, morose, sullen” faces. They acted like they were “afflicting their souls” but they really weren’t! Sincere, religious expressions cannot be regulated, stereotyped, or faked. No one can “fake-out” God! The Pharisees fasted to be “known” as righteous people when they really didn’t want to be righteous; they advertised what should have been secret; they assumed appearances they did not mean; they sought justification in a ritual rather than a relationship; they added traditions to God’s commandments; they made their normal faces to disappear (Greek, aphanizousin) so they might put on faces (Greek, hopos panosin) of “affliction.” JESUS IS TEACHING HERE THAT WHEN THE CHRISTIAN IS FEELING A NEED FOR “REDEDICATION”—DON’T MAKE A SHOW OF IT! —Do what is NORMAL—take any measure necessary to appear as you normally do everyday so that your “affliction of the soul” might never be NOTICED BY PEOPLE. Why should we want others to see us afflicting our soul? They will never know how “righteous we are” deep down within—ONLY GOD KNOWS THAT—and we don’t need to make a show of it for him to know it! Do not insist that others must conform to your way of “rededication” (if it is “fasting”). That has to be secret, personal and spontaneous! There are more important ways to holiness. Severity to the body is OF NO VALUE in checking the indulgence of the flesh (Col. 2:8----3:17). MODERATE, STEADY, STABLE, CONTINUAL SELF-CONTROL IS BETTER! Of course, Jesus wants us to do good works. And when we do they are going to be noticed. But every way possible we must actively, consciously, make it a point to let those who notice where the good comes from—IT COMES FROM GOD, NOT FROM ANYTHING OF HUMAN SELF. We have been so conditioned by “Madison Ave.” techniques of high-pressured advertising, we think everyone is moronically simple-minded and can be faked, “psyched,” or tricked into buying a religion that is not really there in our hearts. Maybe some people can—but not all people. Hypocrisy will soon reveal itself. The people most fooled by hypocrisy are the hypocrites themselves. WE MUST BE VERY CAUTIOUS ABOUT PUBLISHING THE RESULTS OF OUR SERVICE TO GOD. It isn’t that it shouldn’t be done at all—BUT ANYONE CAN SEE FROM THIS TEXT IN MATTHEW 6 THAT IT IS A DANGEROUS

PRACTICE! We would be much better off as individuals and congregations to just go about doing the Lord's will and letting people "stumble" onto what is being done—never mentioning it ourselves in any statistics, or comparisons. Five of the seven churches of Asia Minor thought they presented a pretty religious and righteous appearance to their communities until Jesus got through giving them the divine evaluation! **MOTIVES ARE SO SUPREMELY IMPORTANT THAT WE SHOULD NEVER, NEVER MAKE IT OUR MOTIVE TO IMPRESS PEOPLE WITH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS—IT IS OF NO AVAIL WITH GOD!**

What a person is character-wise (ch. 5) and what a person's relationships are to other persons (ch. 7) **DEPENDS ON WHERE A PERSON'S HEART IS (CH. 6).** **CHAPTER 6 IS THE PIVOTAL CHAPTER OF THIS SERMON!** Chapter 6 is asking what the real controlling object of a person's life is—**IS IT GOD OR MAMMON?** Treasure in this text does not mean merely money. Jesus is not so much concerned with our possessions as with our **ATTITUDE** toward our possessions. It is not what a person has or doesn't have—but what he thinks about his possessions or lack of them. What Jesus is really asking here is: **WHAT DO YOU TREASURE? WHAT DO YOU VALUE?** Do you treasure the Christ-like character of chapter 5, or do you treasure the opposite of it? The words "lay up" and "treasure" are both from the same root word in the Greek text, *thesaurizete*, and *thesaurus* mean "to so delight in something that you always long to have more of it." Man must choose the "treasure" he wishes to "lay up" carefully and wisely, because good or bad, it will take a man's heart with it! People become like that which they love and value (Hosea 9:10; Psa. 116:1-8). Jesus once told a parable to indicate that human beings are only temporarily "stewards" of what their Master (Creator) has given them—and the "prudent" steward will use what he has charge of "to make friends who will receive him into the eternal abode" (Lk. 16:1-9). Jesus concluded (Lk. 16:8)—"The sons of this world are wiser than the sons of light!" A terrible indictment of would-be disciples of Jesus! Only when people use their possessions to serve the revealed will of God do they "lay up" "treasure" in heaven. Only the godly-character a person "longs for and lays up" will never dissolve or be stolen. Some non-Christians amass great fortunes in this world—then they live in cringing, paralyzing fear that someone will steal it, or it will burn up, or the stock market will crash and they will lose it. And if none of that happens, they worry and fret about their heirs taking what they have worked for and frittering it away. The rich eventually die like everyone else, and so does their "fortune." **THE CHRISTIAN'S "FORTUNE OR INHERITANCE" IS THAT HE IS BEING MADE INTO THE IMAGE OF THE SON OF GOD—HOLY, PURE, TRUE, LOVING, SERVING OTHERS, APPROVED OF GOD!** The Christian's "inheritance" is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for him (1 Pet. 1:4). The happy life is one in which a person knows what real treasure is and how and where to store it up! Would you like to test your "treasure quotient"? (a) what do you consider to be your true wealth? (b) how much do you think it is worth? (c) whose do you think it is? (d) could you live without it? (e) are you strongly resolved to become comfortably wealthy? (f) are you in a hurry to be that way? (g) do you regard your neighbor's prosperity with envy or discomfort? (h) are you satisfied with your financial position? Why? (i) do you trust your money to get you whatever you need? (j) are your time, conversation and dreams spent chiefly upon material projects? (k) do you grow angry, out of sorts, or discontented when for any reason you fail to realize your financial

goals, suffer losses or poverty sets in? (l) are you willing to sacrifice your conscience or neglect your duty to better your financial picture or to hold your present position?; (m) when in trouble, financially-wise, where do you turn for relief? IF ALL YOU POSSESS WAS DESTROYED TODAY, WOULD YOU BE LIKE JOB---OR LOT'S WIFE?

The accuracy of the image received by the eye is controlled by the quality of the eye. If the eye is "sound" (healthy) the image received is a real illumination. If the eye is diseased or abnormal or partially blind, the image is distorted. The eye in this little parable symbolizes the mentality of the kingdom citizen—his mind, his conscience, his moral vision, HIS VIEWPOINT OR WAY OF LOOKING AT EVERYTHING—HIS PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE! Choose well the one viewpoint that guides your life because you are becoming what you will be! A PERSON WILL BE GUIDED IN HIS ACTIONS BY THE CONVICTIONS WHICH FORM HIS PHILOSOPHICAL "SIGHT." If this is self-oriented or material-oriented, he will be spiritually and morally blind. Looking through the "eye" of self or worldliness he can never see reality, for self and matter is not the end of reality—God is! Everything a person "sees" looking through "eyes" of self or matter will be distorted! PERSPECTIVE = TREASURES, OR TREASURE = PERSPECTIVE. Worldliness is not just going to "R" rated movies or drunkenness, it has to do with what or WHO possesses you! God made man to be subservient. Everybody serves one master or another. No man is ever absolutely autonomous (self-ruled)(Rom. 6:12-23). Only God is autonomous. God's demand is totalitarian, despotic (the word translated "Lord" in Lk. 2:29 is the Greek word despota, from which we get the English word "despot"). We either serve him or Mammon....IT IS EITHER/OR....THERE IS NO COMPROMISE POSSIBLE. No man can serve two masters. No worker can serve two bosses, because no one can logically or psychologically OBEY TWO LORDS! No man can live a life filled with contradictions...and that is what happens when people try to serve both God and Mammon. "No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him" (2 Tim. 2:4). Human beings are so created that sooner or later their motives will force them to choose which master they wish to please—then they will hate the other! We may have mammon (material things), but mammon is not to have us. We may use mammon, but mammon is not to use us. THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH MONEY AND "THINGS" SO LONG AS THEY MAY BE USED AND ARE USED TO SERVE GOD, AND NOT SERVED AS GODS! And it can't be half and half! That is why the Christian's responsibility toward God in money-matters is not completed with giving 10% of his earnings. The Christian's money ALL belongs in the service of God one way or another. Why did Jesus repeat again and again this obvious truth---that no man can serve two masters? BECAUSE PEOPLE WANT TO REPEAT AGAIN AND AGAIN THE LIE THAT MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS! It is the lie Satan told Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden! Wealth as an end, or even anxiety for it, is the god of SELFISHNESS. Money earned is "coined" life. Money spent for self alone is life spent for self alone; money wasted is life wasted! IF MATERIALISM OR MONEY REALLY DOMINATES OR CONTROLS ANY PART OF YOUR LIFE, MONEY IS YOUR GOD! NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS! SO, JESUS POINTEDLY ASKS IN MATTHEW 6---WHAT REALLY MAKES YOU TICK? WHAT MOTIVATES YOU? WHERE ARE YOU REALLY COMING FROM IN LIFE? WHAT DO YOU TREASURE AND VALUE?

Me merimnate, “Be not anxious,” is in the imperative mood in the Greek text. It is therefore, not just a suggestion—IT IS A COMMAND. Of course, Jesus did not mean that a person is to be shiftless, reckless, thriftless or thoughtless. He did not mean that people are never to think about food, clothing, etc., or never plan for a future, should a future come. People are required by God to be (a) wise and prudent stewards of material possessions (Lk. 16:1-13); (b) plan and provide for future needs by working (Prov. 6:6-8; 2 Cor. 12:14; 1 Tim. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:9-12; 2 Thess. 3:6-15). What Jesus is forbidding is for us to be obsessed with, or let our lives be controlled by anxiety after things that we do not have, so that our loyalty is divided from him. He is forbidding us to make anxiety over “things” the goal or aim or end of our life’s energies. The Greek word for anxiety is merimnate, which means literally, “to draw in different directions—to be divided.” In a survey in Ladies Home Journal a few years ago, it was found that 70% of all people’s worries were about money. Anxiety about money captivates 70% of our thoughts and energies. A Gallup Poll taken recently indicated that most people thought they would have no more financial worries if they could increase their income by only 10%! Physicians have documented that anxiety causes (as well as exacerbates) ulcers, colitis, asthma, migraines, strokes, paralysis, arthritis, fatigue, hypertension and even diabetes. Doctors say that more than half our hospital beds are occupied by anxiety ridden patients. Medical experts think that one out of every 20 Americans now living will spend part of his/her life in an institution for the mentally ill due to anxiety related problems. Anxiety is the cause of much social disorder, crime, suicide and marriage problems. Reason alone should tell us that (a) anxiety is unnecessary. Birds and flowers do not fret and become distracted about what they shall eat or wear—they labor, but they do not become mentally unstable. Are people not of more value than birds and flowers/ GOD WILL PROVIDE! Human experience tells us in no uncertain terms that anxiety cannot add one iota to our span of life! IN FACT, ANXIETY SHORTENS LIFE! ANXIETY IS UNWORTHY OF A CHRISTIAN. It disobeys Christ’s command... “Do not be anxious” That is a command equal to any other a Christian disciple is called upon to obey. (b) anxiety is pagan. Worry is characteristic of heathen unbelief. Religious orthodoxy; evangelistic zeal is useless if we worry like unbelievers. (c) anxiety is improper. It puts “things” out of proper perspective. Anxiety puts more concern on the “baggage” of life than the journey! (d) anxiety is unfruitful. By being anxious we miss that which is first, most important—we miss the kingdom of God and his righteousness. By being anxious we cannot really appreciate what is “added” to life by God. By being anxious we are not able to cope with life. Life must be met head on, one day at a time. We are insufficient to deal with the future before it gets here. We are not omniscient, omnipotent. Today is the only day we can cope with. Tomorrow is never really available to us to do anything about! So do not be anxious! Anxiety is conquered or relieved by (a) learning to think of God (Isa. 26:3; Phil. 4:8-13); (b) learning to talk with God (Lk. 18:1; Phil. 4:4-7); (c) learning to trust God (Psa. 37:5; Phil. 4:19). “God grant me the serenity, To accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; And the wisdom to know the difference.”

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 7:1-27

This chapter's content forms a very appropriate conclusion to this Sermon. It is psychologically necessary. Once a Christian has grown in character as outlined in chapters 5 and 6, he may be tempted to judge harshly those who have not attained this stature (which includes all Christians—even the one doing the judging). So, the warning against wrong attitudes in judging follows. This warning is experientially necessary for while the Christian must be careful of his attitudes in judging, he must understand that there are constant judgments he must make to continue to have the character described in this Sermon. Christians must make certain judgments: God has given man the powers of making judgments; to do so is for his own good—i.e., his protection against evil, and to help others resist evil. Jesus commanded people to make judgments (Jn. 7:24; Lk. 12:57).

Here are some judgments Christians must make:

1. between worldliness and spirituality;
2. judgments in the civil realm;
3. judgments in the church in cases of impenitent, sinning brethren (1 Cor. 5 & 6);
4. between those who are “hogs and dogs” and those who are not (Matt. 7:6);
5. between those who are “false teachers” and who are not

(see the following scriptures, Lk. 12:13; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 2:2; 6:2-5; 7:37; 10:15; 11:13; 2 Cor. 5:14-16; 13:5ff; Gal. 6:1-5; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 5:22; Titus 3:10; Jas. 2:13; 5:19-20; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; 1 Jn. 4:1-6). So Jesus enforces in this chapter the primary importance of remembering that we are always walking under the eyes of God. **EVEN IN THOSE EVERYDAY DECISIONS, JUDGMENTS, AND CONCLUSIONS WE ARE MAKING ABOUT THOSE AROUND US—GOD SEES AND KNOWS!** Jesus is re-enforcing that it is not what men think of us that matters in the ultimate sense—it is what God thinks of us and knows about us. In order to be the kind of persons God wants us to be we must learn how to make the right kind of judgments and what spirit to be in when those judgments are being made. So, really, it comes down to this again: **WHAT IS OF MOST IMPORTANCE IS THE KIND OF PERSON WE ARE ON THE INSIDE. CHARACTER DETERMINES HOW WE WILL ACT AND REACT. CHARACTER WILL DETERMINE WHETHER OUR JUDGMENTS ARE PLEASING TO GOD OR NOT.**

When Jesus said, “Judge not that ye be not judged,” it was not the act of judgment that was being forbidden, but the manner, the spirit, the attitude of the “judge” with which he was concerned. Jesus is not advocating some easy-going tolerance of evil. He is not permitting some “middle-of-the-road” appeasement-philosophy or a policy of peaceful coexistence with wrong! Jesus is not prohibiting the judgments of proper and just civil authorities; nor is he prohibiting church discipline. Then what does Jesus mean by that statement? He is warning against a spirit of judging unfairly, dishonestly, and with prejudice before the evidence is considered. He is warning against a spirit of judging with malice or the desire to hurt. He is warning against a spirit of judging in self-righteous contempt, feeling you are above reproach while everyone else is not (i.e., the Pharisee and the publican, Lk. 18). He is warning against a spirit of judging based upon suspicion, rumor, or the lack of any desire to help the one being judged—it is the spirit of hypocrisy—putting oneself in a good light by making someone else appear in a bad light even if they are in need of correction. He is warning against putting personalities in the place of principles—against the spirit that never takes the trouble to understand circumstances or see mitigating difficulties. If we judge with the attitudes against which Jesus is warning, we shall be judged in the same manner (not by God, because he judges fairly). If we judge without taking all circumstances into account, with unfairness, that is the kind of judgment we shall deserve and get, one way or another from those we’ve judged. People tend to reciprocate in judging us by the same spirit of judgment we give them. Every time we make an unjust judgment, we judge ourselves through our consciences. Psychologically we heap judgment upon our own hearts through guilt for such actions! SO, YOU SEE, IF THAT IS THE SPIRIT (UNFAIR, UNJUST AND MALICIOUS) BY WHICH WE JUDGE OTHERS, THAT IS THE KIND OF JUDGMENT WE WILL INEVITABLY RECEIVE FROM IT! We are incapable of judging in the spirit of Christ until we are rid of hypocritical self-righteousness (by casting the beam out of our own eye). To judge with prejudice and malice is useless. It certainly does not remove the speck in a brother’s eyes—it only makes the speck into a beam! Judgment must begin with ourselves. It is ridiculous for the blind to lead the blind. It is ridiculous for a man to try to see a speck with a beam in his eye. Jesus used this figure of speech for a purpose—the removal of a speck from one’s eye is extremely difficult. No human organ is more sensitive than the eye! Just point a finger or an instrument toward it and it closes by automatic reflex. It is very delicate. It requires tenderness, sensitivity and caution to remove a speck. It requires sympathy, patience, tenderness, and calmness when handling a sensitive precious delicate soul! Gal. 6:1-2; James 5:19-20.

There is a great danger for a Christian to misunderstand Jesus’ statement, “Judge not that ye be not judged...” The Christian may be deceived into believing that ALL judgment is wrong—that he should be tolerant of, and not evaluate unholy, inhuman, animalistic attitudes. So, Jesus’ next warning is against offering holy and sacred matters to perverse, licentious, unreasoning, insensible persons who think and act like animals. “Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you.” The Greek verbs *dote*, and *balete* i.e., “give” and “throw” may be (and should be) translated in the imperative mood. Jesus is giving another command here—not just good advice. Therefore, Christians have to make a judgment about who are

“hogs and dogs.” Dogs in ancient times were mostly vicious, mongrel, scavengers and swine were filthy and dumb—both were religiously “unclean” for Jews. Some who were called “dogs” in Scripture were (a) the treacherous (Psa. 22:16; 59:6-15); (b) homosexuals/sodomites (Deut. 23:17-18; Rev. 22:15); (c) evil, apostates (Phil. 3:2); (d) teachers of filth. (2 Pet. 1:22). Some who were called “swine” in Scripture were (a) the unclean (Lev. 11:7-8; 14:8; Isa. 65:4; 66:3); (b) the indiscrete (Prov. 11:22); (c) the incorrigible (2 Pet. 2:22). “Dogs and hogs” are those obdurate, perverse people who have abandoned all moral restraints and who are incapable of appreciating the blessing and value of holy things (such as the Bible, the gospel, the church, the truth, holy living, etc.). Examples of those apparently considered no longer worthy of holy things: (a) the crowds clamoring for more bread, Jn. 6; (b) an evil generation seeking more signs, Matt. 16; (c) Herod, “the fox” (Lk. 23); (d) those who persecute his disciples (Matt. 10; Acts chs. 13-18); (e) those who “hinder” gospel preaching, Elymas (Acts 13); (f) Simon Magus (Acts 8); (g) Paul’s instruction concerning the selection of elders—not to give the office to the unworthy (1 Tim. 5:19-24). We must make proper discrimination and make some practical judgments about giving holy things to those who would use them for evil. It is not easy to make such judgments. We must be wise, merciful, patient and loving. But when men begin to show disregard, disrespect and abandonment of all moral restraint or interest in truth and justice, we will be at fault for wasting the holy things of God for their evil use. **WE MUST MAKE SOME JUDGMENTS!**

Jesus says, “Judge not...” then immediately says, “Judge which are hogs and dogs”—**WE CAN UNDERSTAND WE NEED HELP!** Where do we turn for help—within ourselves? **NO!** To another human being? **NO!** Help is to be sought categorically and systematically from God. (a) “**ASK**”—depend on God’s will, not our own—what is stressed here is dependence on the **ONE** whose wisdom for judgment is infallible and divine (Heb. 4:14-16); (b) “**SEEK**”—search for God’s will in the only place he has chosen to reveal it—**IN THE BIBLE** (Heb. 4:12-13)—the right spirit for judging can be had by the believer who will take the initiative and dig it out of the words of the Holy Spirit in the Bible—God is not going to just push it off on those who haven’t the desire or initiative to **SEEK!**; (c) “**KNOCK**”—be persistent—keep asking and seeking for the right spirit in judging despite difficulties and obstacles—be constant in doing God’s will and you will learn the right spirit for judging (Heb. 5:14). Those who pray for God’s Holy Spirit will not be given stones or serpents (Lk. 11:13). He is more eager than any parent to give the spirit of goodness, gentleness, kindness, meekness, self-control to all who will take the initiative to ask, seek and knock.. Only God’s Spirit can give you the spirit of “Do unto others...” The best the world can come up with is —“Don’t do anything to anyone you wouldn’t want them to do to you.” **WHEN OTHERS JUDGE YOU, WHAT DO YOU WANT THEM TO DO UNTO YOU?** (a) know all the facts; (b) search for extenuating circumstances; (c) don’t judge my opinions—I am free in Christ to have those; (d) come to me first in matters that need correction; (e) give me positive suggestions for improvement; (f) remember the good I have done, also; (g) judge me only by God’s word; (h) make sure you know God’s word; (i) be as kind and tender with me as possible because I am sensitive, I have feelings that hurt easily.

IF WE KNEW!

If we knew the cares and trials, Knew the efforts all in vain,
And the bitter disappointments, Understood the loss and gain—
Would the grim eternal roughness Seem—I wonder—just the same?
Should we help where now we hinder? Should we pity where we blame?

Ah! We judge each other harshly, Knowing not life's hidden force,
Knowing not the fount of action Is less turbid at its source;
Seeing not amid the evil All the golden grains of good;
And we'd love each other better If we only understood.

Could we judge all deeds by motives That surround each other's lives,
See the naked heart and spirit, Know what spur the actions gives;
Often we should find it better, Purer than we judge we should,
We would love each other better If we only understood.

Could we judge all deeds by motives, See the good and bad within,
Often we would love the sinner All the while we loathe the sin.
Could we know the powers working To o'erthrow integrity,
We would judge each other's errors With more patient charity.

As Christians we are compelled to regard (judge) every person we meet from Christ's perspectives, from his judgments, according to his Spirit, revealed in his word (see 2 Cor. 5:11-21).

YES! Jesus said it! There will be only a few who find the way to life! That is because so many billions of people dead and living have chosen the EASY way in life (the life in which we must make decisions, judgments, and choices) instead of the NARROW AND DIFFICULT way in life! The narrow way is the difficult way. It appears on the surface to be undesirable! "Narrow" is from the Greek word stenes, from which we get the English prefix, "steno" thus "steno-graphy" is "short-hand." The Greek word stenos means, "difficult, restricted, bounded, circumscribed, controlled, limited, regulated, restrained." Jesus walked this way and described it in Luke 12:49-50 as sunechomai, "constrained, pressured, imprisoned." THE "NARROW" WAY IS THE WAY OF THE CROSS! The Christian's way is narrow and difficult from the beginning to the end. There are no rest-stops along the way, no "time-outs" or holidays off. It is always a fight, a race to be run, a war to be fought, a labor to

be toiled at (“always abounding in the work of the Lord...” 1 Cor. 15:58). Jesus never portrayed the life of his disciples as easy, self-indulgent, or even pleasant... “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you!” (Jn. 15:18-27). Jesus constantly demanded of his disciples that they “COUNT THE COST” if they wished to “sign on.” “Whoever does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:33). Christianity does not get easier along the way. Paul had to “pommel his body daily” and “press on every day.” NO WONDER FEW EVER FIND THIS WAY—ONLY A FEW ARE LOOKING—AND EVEN AMONG THOSE WHO LOOK AND FIND, ONLY A FEW WANT IT AFTER THEY HAVE FOUND IT! Jesus said, “few would be saved” (Lk. 13:22-30) and then he preached about the “cost” of discipleship (Lk. 14-18). Few will be saved because only a few are willing to pay the price of renouncing all they have to belong to Jesus! The broad and easy way leads to destruction. It is easy to be indulgent, to waste, to hate, to exploit others; it is easy to play the part, be a hypocrite, be popular and go with the crowd. THE EASY WAY IS THE WAY OF THE MAJORITY! One does not have to swim against the current of popular opinion—to brace against the winds of fad and fashion. On the broad way one may follow his own inclinations and pay no attention to the revealed will of God. He does not have to feel any restrictions, no pressures, no obligations. On the broad way one does not have to make judgments about good and evil—he does not have to take a stand one way or another. MAKING JUDGMENTS ABOUT GOOD AND EVIL PUTS YOU ON THE NARROW, DIFFICULT AND HARD WAY! The Christian is not permitted the luxury of non-commitment; non-decisiveness, non-judging. Nothing is easy for the Christian. The grace of God does not make the Christian life easy—IT MAKES IT VICTORIOUS AND JOYOUS—BUT NOT EASY!

Notice Matthew 7:15-20 teaches emphatically that (a) error is possible among human religious teachers; (b) there is such a thing as objective truth in religion; (c) error does matter because by it men lose their souls. False teachers are “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” They sound like sheep and disguise their real intentions which is to ravage and feed on the flock (Acts 20:28-32). They are pseudoprophets—literally, “pseudo-prophets” We are to make judgments about who are true and false teachers! Our judgments are made according to the “fruit” of their teachings and their lives. WE JUDGE THEM “BY THEIR FRUITS” BECAUSE THEY CAN LIE WITH OR “SPIN” THEIR TEACHINGS! Most “pseudo-prophets” (false-teachers) are slick, sly, subtle and shrewd in what they teach—BUT EVENTUALLY, WHAT IS IN THEIR HEART WILL COME OUT IN THEIR DAILY LIVING! A tree that has the right “tap root” will produce good fruit. A teacher that really wants to do the will of God, is honest and believing, will produce good fruit. He cannot produce any other kind of fruit. He will consistently bear out in his living what the Bible says is good and true. And those who adhere to his teaching will do the same. That doesn’t mean a “true teacher” wont make a mistake occasionally—but it will not be a deliberate, cunning, malicious and exploitative mistake. The religious teacher that does not believe God’s word, is deceitful, dishonest and rebellious in his heart and will eventually and inevitably produce falseness, impurity, hate, disobedience and discord—EVIL FRUIT. An evil “tap-root” cannot bear good fruit. We are not to judge teachers so much by what they say, as what their lives produce (see 2 Pet. 2:1-22)—LOOK TO SEE WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE ACCEPT THEIR TEACHINGS AND FOLLOW THEM! But we must not be hasty in judging someone as a false teacher. All

sheep are not wolves! False teaching is not (a) honest error (we are all erring brethren at one time or another); (b) cultural differences; (c) lower or higher levels of spiritual maturity; (d) innocent ignorance.

Doctrinal precision does not always mean one is a true teacher!!! (7:21-23). Many will come to Jesus and say, “Lord, Lord, I am surely a sheep for I have cast out demons, and prophesied in your name, and have done many mighty works in your name.” Jesus’ answer: IT IS NOT WHAT, BUT WHY YOU HAVE DONE IT! If you did it to glorify your self or justify yourself, you are a worker of iniquity. All the acts of orthodoxy may be counterfeited (remember Matthew, chapter 6). He who does what he does because he wants to do the will of the Father in heaven, shall enter the kingdom. BUT LET US BEWARE OF SELF-DECEPTION! Not everyone who preaches, prophesies, performs miracles, or just performs, will enter the kingdom,—BUT THE ONE WHO DOES THE WILL OF THE FATHER IN HEAVEN IS THE ONE WHO ENTERS! With the teacher as with the learner (disciple) MOTIVE IS ALL IMPORTANT! How could people who do mighty works in the name of Jesus be cast out?—(a) doing them for mercenary reasons; (b) doing them for personal glory, for boasting; (c) doing them to earn justification; (d) doing them to divide the church, and a hundred other self-centered reasons!

The test of a building is not its pretentious “outside,” but the strength of its foundation. The proof of the durability of a life or character is not its outward manifestation only, but its real, down deep, character (foundation). The life that endures must be built on a rock-solid base. The one who does so must “dig deep” (Lk. 6:48), to find the bed-rock, the ultimate, the absolute—JESUS CHRIST AND HIS WORD! Faith in the immovable, invariable, unconquerable word of God gives man a place to stand against the storms of life—persecution, poverty, illness, loneliness, death. THIS IS WISDOM —BUILDING ONE’S CHARACTER ON JESUS AND HIS WORD! “In whom (Jesus) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom (Col. 2:3—see also Rom. 11:33; 1 Cor. 1:30).

Regardless of how sensible a person may be in all other affairs of living, if he builds his life on something other than Jesus’ Word—HE IS A FOOL! The world that rejects the revelation of God is dumb, ignorant, foolish, stupid and insane! A person may choose from any philosophy or world religion he wants, but the outcome is: THEY ARE ALL SHIFTING SANDS OF STUPIDITY. They are all treacherous and shallow, never solid or enduring. With such a false foundation, all is well as long as the sun shines, but it is only a false security, for as soon as the storm hits (and “storms” come to every life) that life will crumble, disintegrate and self-destruct! IT IS EASY TO ADMIRE AND QUOTE JESUS’ SAYINGS, BUT DO WE DO THEM—IN OUR PRIVATE LIVES, IN OUR HOMES, ON THE JOB? Do we do them so consistently that they form the basis of our fundamental life-patterning viewpoints? Do his words become the real basis of our character, mentality-motives-morality—THE VERY FOUNDATION OF OUR PERSONALITIES? Jesus leaves his audience breathlessly listening to the thunderous crash of the wrecked house echoing in their ears! In their mind’s eye they can see the swirling torrents gouge away the sand and wash away the foundation and structure of the building (like the hurricanes do in Florida). Jesus concludes

by saying, "This is the tragedy of a disobedient life; decided where you stand in relation to MY WORDS!"

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 8:1- 9:38

TO ESTABLISH FOR MATTHEW'S READERS (MAINLY JEWS) JESUS' CREDENTIALS AS THE MESSIAH, Matthew recorded these two chapters (out of chronological order to the times of his ministry) filled with miracles which Jesus did early in his ministry. Matthew never intended to focus his account of Jesus on chronological order. His audience would be more interested in Jesus' credentials, i.e., what he did, as the Messiah of the OT prophets. Even the OT writings leave much to be desired in "chronological order" from an Occidental viewpoint. And the Hebrew language puts the verb in the sentence before the subject (noun). The key to these chapters is 8:17—Jesus' miracles were to fulfill what the OT prophets predicted about the Messiah's earthly ministry which would be validated by miracles of healing, etc. It is important to note that Jesus did NOT heal for notoriety: (a) he featured teaching, not miracles in his ministry; (b) he was not interested in establishing a reputation as a wonder-worker; (c) he didn't perform miracles for the sake of performance; (d) he didn't seek to attract multitudes to himself by working miracles—often he commanded the one who had received a miracle to "tell no one"; (e) he did not wish to perform miracles profusely and indiscriminately upon the multitudes—he deliberately chose 1 or 2 persons out of most multitudes for his miracles; (f) he didn't perform his miracles primarily for the benefit of the recipient, but for those standing by watching; (g) his healing was not intended to be universal—it was primarily for the Jews (Matt. 15:24); (h) he did not consider healing and salvation of equal importance; (i) he healed every kind of affliction (even death); (j) many of his miracles preclude any possibility that they were done by some psycho-somatic hypnotism or power of positive thinking; (k) he never indicated that everyone should seek healing; (l) with but one exception, Jesus healed only Jews; (m) he never discouraged the use of physicians and medical remedies; (n) there was never a question about one being afflicted whom he healed; (o) there was never any doubt by any witnesses whether the one he healed was healed or not; (p) there was never a documented case of a relapse; (q) Jesus never healed "partially"; (r) faith was never made a uniform condition of healing; (s) Jesus never failed to heal anyone he set out to heal, for any reason; (t) he specialized in extreme cases—people at the point of death, people dead; (u) no evidence ever documented that Jesus defrauded or deceived anyone; (v) he never told sick people to ignore the symptoms of their illnesses; (w) he never failed to heal ALL in a group, when he decided to heal all; (x) his healing's were invariably instantaneous; (y) he never took money for healing; (z) many of his healing's and other miracles were done in the immediate presence of his critics and adversaries who thoroughly investigated his miracles and could present no evidence they were false.

The careful student will read all the parallel passages concerning these miracles grouped by subject matter in Matthew:

(a) The Leper	Matt. 8:1-4	Mk. 1:40-45	Lk. 5:12-16
(b) Centurion's Servant	Matt. 8:5-13		Lk. 7:1-10
(c) Peter's mother-in-law	Matt. 8:14-17	Mk. 1:29-34	Lk. 4:38-41
(d) Cost of discipleship	Matt. :18-22		Lk. 9:57-62
(e) Stilling the tempest	Matt. 8:23-27	Mk. 4:35-41	Lk. 8:22-25
(f) Gadarene demons	Matt. 8:28-34	Mk. 5:1-16	Lk. 8:26-36
(g) Paralytic	Matt. 9:1-8	Mk. 2:3-12	Lk. 5:18-26

All these miracles take place during the first great Galilean ministry of Jesus which covers almost two years. The events of Matthew 8 are actually scattered throughout this entire two years. And they do not follow one another as Matthew seems to indicate. The most probable order is closer that of Luke—(a) Peter's mother-in-law; (b) the leper cleansed; (c) the paralytic forgiven and healed; (d) the centurion's servant healed; (e) the cost of discipleship; (f) stilling the tempest; (g) the demoniacs healed.

It was not the physical, but the social and religious consequences of leprosy that made the leper's situation so extreme (see Lev. chs. 13 & 14). They were cast out of towns and villages and forced to live in caves or tombs, far away from healthy people. They were not allowed to come within 100 ft. of a non-leper. When anyone approached, the leper was required to cry out concerning himself, "Unclean, unclean!" People often threw stones and sticks (even the rabbis did so) at them. No one was allowed to touch a leper. Lepers were deprived of all religious contact (temple, synagogue). They were de facto outcasts, "in exile from the camp of Israel." The "leprosy" of the Bible is not the same as what is today Hansen's Disease which is erroneously called leprosy. The Hebrew word for "leprosy" is tzara'ath and is from a root word meaning "to cast down, to defile." In Lev. 13 & 14, even garments and walls of houses could have "leprosy." Priests of the OT were given only a few days to diagnose tzara'ath. It is medically impossible to diagnose modern Hansen's Disease in such a short time. The Greek word in the NT for "leper" is lepros from lepra. The pre-Biblical Greek word lepra meant "psoriasis, or scaly." Translators of the Latin Vulgate (used for the KJV) rendered the Greek word lepra into the Latin leprosus (which is a transliteration, not a translation). It was from the Latin that our first English transliteration of the word "leprosy" came. Had the Greek word been translated it would have been rendered, "scaly." Even the Latin word leprosus means "a scaling or peeling condition" and the Latin word liber

“book or parchment or leaves”) is of the same derivation. Therefore, the Hebrew word tzara’ath and the Greek word lepra/leprous apparently denoted skin conditions which were pronounced “unclean” for religious and social reasons but which were curable. These skin conditions served the same purpose as other conditions which incurred defilement—to show symbolically the absoluteness of man’s estrangement from God because of sin! It is significant that there is no mention of leprosy (defilement) after the death and resurrection of Christ. The Law was nailed to the cross and fulfilled; there was no more ceremonial defilement. So, while the apostles (in the book of Acts and the Epistles) healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, etc., **THEY NEVER HEALED OR CLEANSED A LEPER!** Modern doctors have shown that the symptoms related in Lev. 13 & 14 have no connection with Hansen’s Disease which is an incurable disease mainly affecting the nervous system. In “healing” the leper Jesus declares: (a) I have authority to fulfill and supercede the Law of Moses; (b) I have power to take away the penalty that keeps man from God; (c) My love fulfills the law; (d) although I fulfill the law I do not ignore the authority of the law so long as it is in effect—so he sent the leper to the priest for verification that he was cleansed.

This centurion (commander of 100 men in the Roman army) lived in Capernaum. He was a good man. Luke says his servant was “dear” to him. The Jewish elders said, “He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation and he built us our synagogue.” Polybius (pronounced, pol-ee-beeus) an ancient historian, says that the best men in the Roman army held the rank of centurion. Every centurion mentioned in the NT appears to be a “good” man (Matt. 27:54ff; Lk. 23:47ff; Acts 10:1ff; 27:43ff). The centurion’s servant “was at the point of death” (Greek in Luke 7:2 emellen teleutan, “about finished!”). He must have heard of Jesus’ healing power at some earlier date. But because the centurion, being a Gentile, thought Jesus would have nothing to do with him, he sent Jewish elders to beseech Jesus. When Jesus started for the centurion’s home, the centurion sent messengers saying, “Do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof...” **THAT WAS VERY UNUSUAL HUMILITY FOR A ROMAN ARMY OFFICER STATIONED IN PALESTINE!** Based on the testimony he had about Jesus from some source, he reasoned that Jesus was a man of much greater power than he. The centurion was a man who understood that trust and obedience are inseparable. He said to Jesus, “Just say the word...” He was convinced of Jesus’ authority so he believed that whatever Jesus said **SHOULD, AND WOULD, BE OBEYED!** Jesus “marveled” at this centurion’s grasp of faith and authority. Only twice in the Gospel records is Jesus said to have marveled—once at unbelief (Mk. 6:6) and here, at belief. Jesus marveled not because he was unaware that such a faith could exist—but because he was aware of how vibrant and alive this centurion’s faith was compared to that of most of the Jews who had centuries of preparation for them to acknowledge Jesus’s authority and trust in it while this Gentile had no “oracles of God”—yet he believed! Faith is measurable—but the Lord measures by **QUALITY**, not quantity. Faith is not a question of “how much,” but “what kind.” This event moved Jesus to give a glorious prediction of the salvation of many of the Gentiles and a chilling prediction of the doom of the unbelieving Jews. Never write off any one from being able to have faith in Jesus—a Roman centurion did! Obedience is the only reasonable and proper response of an acknowledgment of divine authority. The centurion saw that better

than most human beings!

Matthew 8:17 (quoted from Isa. 53:4) DOES NOT mean that all Christians (because of the atonement) should expect healing of physical ailments! Unusual pain, sorrow and grief was equated with unusual guilt in the ancient world (Job. 3:7-8; 8:4; 11:6; John 9:1ff)—but Jesus corrected that idea in Luke 13 pointing to the Galileans slaughtered near the altar and those killed by the tower of Siloam. The context of Isa. 53 indicates the subject is sin—not physical sickness. Death is simply the cumulative effect of one physical malady or another. If the atonement made provision for continued physical healing, man would live forever in this sin-cursed world. Note in Matt. 8:16-17 that Isa. 53:5 was NOT QUOTED! This is significant. Jesus was fulfilling Isa. 53:4; but he was not fulfilling Isa. 53:5 during his life. Jesus was healing some people as Isaiah predicted, but Jesus did not atone for sin until he died on the cross. There is no statement in the whole Bible suggesting that Christ “bore our sicknesses in his own body...” or that he was “made to be sick, diseased, or possessed with infirmity” for us. HE WAS MADE TO BE SIN ON OUR BEHALF (2 Cor. 5:21). The NT plainly shows that not all of the healing’s of Jesus demanded faith in him. Thus, the efficacy of his atonement could not apply to the healing. The NT also shows that many people with faith in the atonement of Christ were not healed of their sicknesses (2 Cor. 12:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:20). If the atonement provides for physical healing for every believer (a) why does not one receive healing at the moment of conversion and baptism—the place where the efficacy of the atonement is initially applied; (b) why do not all believers receive healing; (c) why is there as large a percentage of sickness among believers as there is among unbelievers; (d) why did Paul prescribe a medical treatment to Timothy for his “oft infirmities”? (1 Tim. 5:23); (e) why are there so many faithful, honest, believing people who so earnestly and diligently seek healing, finding none whatever? Christ will deal with our need for an illness-free body at our resurrection (1 Cor. 15:35ff). Jesus redeemed the whole creation with his atoning death. But the physical aspect of the redemption awaits the creation of a new heaven and earth (Rom. 8:18-25). Until that time, we must suffer and die, physically, while we are being renewed in the “inner man” day by day (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Out of ALL OF THE 31 INSTANCES of miraculous healing done by Jesus ONLY ONCE DID HE REQUIRE FAITH (Matt. 9:27-31)—the two blind men. In some instances faith was present but not required. In 18 of the 31 instances no faith was indicated or if there was, it was faith on the part of someone other than the one healed! In 3 instances IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE FOR THOSE “HEALED” TO INDICATE FAITH BECAUSE THEY WERE DEAD! Time after time, modern “faith-healers” have been proven by eyewitnesses to be fraudulent failures, fakers and liars! Anyone who doesn’t know that need only get a copy of Modern Divine Healing, by Waymon D. Miller, Old Paths Book Club, Rosemead, CA, 1956; or The Modern Tongues and Healing Movement, by Carroll Stegall, Jr., B.D., D.D. published by Dr. Stegall himself, Box 374, Shalimar, FL.; or The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues, by John P. Kildahl, Harper & Row, NY, 1972.

Matthew (8:28-34) uses the name of the city of Gadara for the area for the benefit of Jewish readers. Mark and Luke use the name of another city, Gerasa (Roman capital of the whole region) for the benefit of Gentile readers. Matthew says there were two men

possessed of demons; Mark says there was a man with an unclean spirit; Luke says Jesus met a man from there who had demons. Do we have a contradiction in the Bible here? There is no contradiction unless Mark and/or Luke says “there was ONLY one demon-possessed man.” Modern news reporters vary in accounts just as these men did and no one accuses them of historical contradictions. Modern archaeologists have excavated the cliffs around Gadara and found tombs measuring 20 feet square, with side recesses for bodies. That is how these demoniacs could “live among the tombs” (Lk. 8:27). They were pitiful cases for they: (a) had been naked for a long time; (b) lived among dead bodies; (c) were seized with fits of violence many times by the demons; (d) were kept under guard and bound with chains and leg irons by the people of the area; (e) broke the chains and irons and the demons drove both of them into the uninhabited wild places of the area. When they saw Jesus they prostrated themselves, crying, “What have you to do with us, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech you do not torment us.” Demons (a) recognize their true Sovereign is not the devil; (b) know that Jesus Lord of all; (c) know they have nothing in common with Jesus except that he is ultimately set to punish them in torments. Luke says one of them had “legions” of demons (a Roman “legion” was 6000 soldiers). The demons begged Jesus to allow them to inhabit a herd of swine feeding near the tombs. Mark says there were approximately 2000 swine in the herd. There were strict prohibitions in Judaism against Jews eating, raising or touching swine. However, the Jews who lived east of the Jordan River often accommodated themselves to the culture of the Gentile majority and paid little attention to Mosaic law, especially if it involved economics! The demons knew Jesus would not allow them to inhabit another human being—he cast them out every time he was asked to do so. They knew they were doomed to return to the abyss if they had no physical body to inhabit. Perhaps they also knew that since the swine had no will by which they might be controlled, they could destroy the swine and Jesus would be blamed by the populace and the demons would have some temporary victory over him and be able to inhabit these two human wretches again! The malicious, destructive rebellion of the devil and his cohorts is graphically illustrated here. They grasp at any straw to destroy anything God has made. BUT THEY DIDN’T FOOL JESUS! He knew this would shock the materialistically-minded people of this country out of their indifference toward these pitiful demon-possessed. Many people of this area later became followers of Christ and some of the earliest Christian churches were formed in this area. The loss of 2000 swine (who would be butchered later anyway) would produce relief for these demon possessed men, their salvation and that of hundreds of others from that area. THIS IS WHAT EARTHLY GOODS ARE TO BE USED FOR BY ALL CHRISTIANS! The effects of this miracle were; (a) the herdsmen fled and told about Jesus in the city and country-side—spontaneous evangelism!; (b) the people went out to see what had happened—they had to see for themselves—indifference toward Jesus was cured; (c) when the story was told again, the people were seized, gripped, laid hold of, by great FEAR. The impact of what Jesus had done, and who he must be, paralyzed them with fear at what he might yet do! They entreated Jesus to leave their area. Probably they were filled with guilt (more than economic loss). The healed man kept on begging Jesus that he might go with him, but Jesus had a work for the man to do right in the most difficult place on earth—HIS OWN HOME TOWN! People who would object that Jesus was cruel to animals here will eat butchered animal flesh, cut down trees, dig up weeds and make gardens only to

pull up or pick the vegetables and eat them, live in houses made of trees, crushed rock, and all other kinds of “destroyed” things! Besides, they were Jesus’ pigs by right of creation—he could do with them any thing he wished!

Jesus saw the faith of the four friends of the paralyzed man when they dug the hole in the roof and let the man down into the room on his pallet. They had brought the man to Jesus for healing of his physical illness—BUT JESUS FIRST SAID TO THE PARALYZED MAN, “SON, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN.” The paralyzed man needed his sins forgiven much more than he needed his paralysis healed! All human bodies must die or be shed in order to get into heaven. Every person who inherits heaven must be changed into immortality. But no one can go to heaven without forgiveness of sins! Jesus also intended to use this man’s condition to prove to the crowds that he was the Son of God and that he HAD AUTHORITY ON EARTH TO FORGIVE SINS. The Jews did not find it hard to believe that God in heaven could forgive sins—but for some man on earth to say he could forgive sins would be blasphemy—if he were not God! Jesus was about to give evidence, beyond any reasonable doubt, that HE WAS GOD! If Jesus had forgiven the man’s sins and had never healed him, the man would have been grateful and blessed. Don’t forget that the great apostle Paul spent all his Christian life with a “thorn in the flesh.” Many Christians have endured pain, illness, infirmity, all the days of their lives, but that does not mean they are less fortunate than the healthy sinners, or healthy Christians for that matter! If the grace of God was sufficient for Paul, it is sufficient for you and for me! We simply must get the Christian and the Biblical mind on this matter! There was nothing more sufficient by way of evidence Jesus could do to prove that he was God than instantaneously, miraculously, make a man get up and walk who had been totally paralyzed and unable to get off his pallet. For some of the crowd it was sufficient. They had never seen anything like it. No application of medicine, no hands laid on the cripple, no screening for probability of being healed, no examination to attest that he was crippled, no waiting period for the miracle to take effect, no partial or gradual recovery—HE GOT UP IMMEDIATELY AT JESUS’ WORD AND TOOK UP HIS PALLET AND WALKED! Jesus healed with a mere word from his mouth! GOD CREATES THIS VAST UNIVERSE OF OURS OUT OF NOTHING WITH SIMPLY A WORD! Jesus demonstrated he was God. If Jesus can do this, then he can claim to have the authority to forgive sins without being guilty of blasphemy. Those today who claim authority to “absolve” sins are guilty of blasphemy! Think about it! Catholicism is linked to blasphemy! God has never given any man authority to forgive men’s sins. There is only one mediator between man and God, himself man, Jesus Christ. No pope, no priest, no Mary, and no saints can forgive our sins—and to say they can is blasphemy!

Matthew, the publican (i.e., tax-collector) operated in the city of Capernaum—a busy city of great commerce. His name Levi means “companion” in Hebrew; the name Matthew means “gift.” Matthew’s father’s name was “Alphaeus.” Matthew was undoubtedly skilled in mathematics, record-keeping, organizing—administering business. He was apparently well-versed in the prophecies of the Old Testament. He left a lucrative position to follow Jesus and must have been a man of deep friendship and spiritual concern for others to invite his “publican” friends to meet and dine with Jesus. The typical publican of that time

may be characterized as: (a) self-centered, Matt. 5:46-47; (b) heathenish, Matt. 18:17; 11:19; 21:31; (c) greedy, Lk. 19:2,8; (d) however, more apt to repent than a Pharisee, Lk. 7:29-30; 18:9-14; 19:8. Matthew does not seem to fit all those characteristics except the last. Publicans were hated by the Jews and were considered “agents of a foreign government.” Publicans were native-born people collecting taxes for their Roman conquerors. The Romans “farmed out” the business of tax collecting. They told the publican how much taxes they expected him to collect and send to Rome and then “looked the other way” so “publicans” might extort, defraud, manipulate, cheat and do whatever their consciences would allow to collect as much MORE as they wished for their own salaries. Many publicans became very rich by extorting and defrauding from their own countrymen! The Jews had to pay taxes to the Jewish priesthood, to Herod, and the Romans which taxes went off to a foreign treasury. SO THE JEWS CONSIDERED PUBLICANS AS TRAITORS, HEATHEN, NOT FIT TO BE INCLUDED IN GOD’S COVENANT, CLASSED WITH THE WORST OF SINNERS! Jesus exacerbated the hatred of the Pharisees toward himself by dining in the home of Matthew with a whole house full of publicans. In dining with Matthew Jesus was willing to let his own reputation be slandered by the “upper-crust” of society; willing to expose himself to religious excommunication by the self-righteous Pharisees; willing to take the chance that many others might misunderstand his actions or be influenced to do so. Does eating or visiting with sinners mean one has aligned himself with their way of life? It certainly doesn’t have to! It didn’t with Jesus! The Christian who shows compassion upon the outcast, the lonely, the sinner, with the right motives and right behavior by associating with them WILL BE KNOWN TO BE RIGHT BY GOD, WHETHER OTHER MEN KNOW IT OR NOT! 2 John 10-11 and 2 Thess. 3:6-14 probably mean, “Do not give anyone the impression that a non-believer is a believer by inviting them to participate in the congregation as if they were.” The NT makes it plain that Christians will be judged, not so much by errors they may make in knowledge, as by deliberate refusal to show compassion (Matt. 25:31ff; James 2:1-26; 5:1ff).

We are now, at Matthew 9:20-22, in the second Galilean preaching tour of Jesus (see also Mk. 5:25-34; Lk. 8:43-48). The call of Matthew and the controversy about fasting and feasting occurred during the first Galilean tour, some 6 months before raising Jairus’ daughter from the dead and healing this woman with the issue of blood. Mark 5:21 tells us that at this time multitudes thronged about Jesus at the seashore and pressed in upon him, everyone trying to touch him, until it became almost impossible for him to walk. The scene would be similar to the President of the U.S. walking among people, except Jesus had no bodyguards or roped-off areas. A ruler of a synagogue in Capernaum named Jairus came to Jesus on behalf of his dying daughter. On his way to Jairus’ house, in the midst of the clamoring crowd, was a woman who had a “flow of blood” (Greek *hrusei haimatos*, “gushing of blood”—we would call it a “hemorrhage”). She had this debilitating condition for 12 years. Mark says the woman “had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.” Her infirmity was incurable by physicians; she must have been very emaciated, weak, and depressed. The fringe of the garment is called *tzitzith* in Num. 15:38-39, and *gedilim* in Deut. 22:12; and in Greek it is called *kraspedou*. Both Hebrew and Greek words mean “tassel, fringe, or trimming” (not “hem” as

we think of it today). It consisted of twisted cords fastened to the outer garments as “borders” on cloaks or coats to remind Israelites of their obligations to be loyal to Jehovah. Later such fringes became distinct “badges of Judaism” and many Pharisees lengthened their “fringes” to make a public show of how righteously-Israelite they were. This poor, sick, emaciated, feeble woman was ashamed and afraid to approach Jesus face to face since her hemorrhage made her ceremonially “unclean” (Lev. 15:19-31). As a result, almost exactly like the leper, she was banned from the public, banned from the temple, the synagogue, the market-place, and should she touch anyone else she would make them “unclean” (Num. 19:22). Considering the woman’s helplessness, hopelessness and the stigma she had to bear, it is to her credit that she had not become bitter. She had heard reports about Jesus (Mk. 5:27) and believed he could heal her even if all she could do was touch the tassels of his garment. Her faith was not based on mysticism or on her own feelings—but on the reports from eyewitnesses to former healings by Jesus. She was desperate but her faith was not based on her desperation—it was based on evidence. Luke, the physician, records precisely that when she touched Jesus her “flow” of blood ceased immediately. The healing was instantaneous—not gradual. No need for her to return to Jesus for more healing sessions. If Jesus knew he had been touched and that power had gone from him, he knew who had touched his garment; why then did he ask? (a) probably to publicly prove the woman’s cure so that she might return to worship in the temple and have social fraternization again; (b) to make sure she knew that the power to heal was with him, not his cloak; (c) to give the woman an opportunity to express her gratitude and become a witness to those in that crowd of Jesus’ identity. When Jesus asked who touched him, all in the crowd denied it—probably afraid of him. Peter and the other disciples thought it rather odd that Jesus would suddenly become aware someone had touched him when the crowd had been pressing in upon him all the way. **BUT JESUS WAS TALKING ABOUT A UNIQUE TOUCH OF FAITH.** He perceived that power had gone out from him. The Greek word epignous, means that he knew it mentally—objectively, physically. The woman also “knew” egno, mentally, empirically, rationally, not emotionally and subjectively, that she was healed. **IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED TO HER, PHYSICALLY—she didn’t just “feel” like it may have happened.** She saw that she could not remain anonymous. So she came trembling and prostrated herself down before Jesus in the presence of that pushing, shoving, yakking crowd, and declared why she had touched him and how she had been immediately cured. She was probably expecting some fiery rebukes from this great Rabbi, but Jesus spoke tenderly to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace (wholeness).” She was healed from her infirmity, and saved by her faith—restored to worship God and to society. Jesus was on a very important mission to the home of a ruler of the Jews, Jairus; crowds were jostling and shoving; people were clamoring for his attention; his popularity was astounding; **BUT HE STOPPED TO SHOW COMPASSION ON THIS POOR WRETCH OF HUMANITY! HE ALLOWED THE UNCLEAN TO TOUCH HIM SO SHE MIGHT BE CLEANSED. HIS COMPASSION FOR YOU AND ME IS EQUALLY AS LOVING. HE ALLOWS US TO TOUCH HIM BY FAITH AND BE CLEANSED OF OUR UNCLEAN SINS!** “Wonderful grace of Jesus—greater than all my sins.....”

All the while Jesus was speaking to the woman, Jairus no doubt stood by filled with

anxiety, pleading with Jesus to hurry on. Suddenly, pushing through the crowd, came someone from Jairus' house blurting out the shocking news, "Your little daughter is dead...do not vex the Rabbi any longer." The child had died before the messenger left the house. Jairus had been "vexing" Jesus to hurry (Greek *skulleis* Mark 5:35, means "agitate, annoy"). Jesus hearing the announcement, spoke directly to Jairus, "Do not fear, only believe and she will be saved..." That is a rather terse way to speak at such a moment. Jesus did not say how it would be done—he merely said that Jairus was to trust him. Arriving at the scene, Jesus entered the house with only Peter, John and James, and Jairus and his wife (Mk. 5:37). Inside the house was pandemonium. Matthew used the Greek word *thoruboumenon*, and it is translated "tumult" but in Acts 17:5 it is translated, "riot." Mark uses three different Greek words to express the wailing, weeping, crying, moaning, beating of the chest, etc. that was going on. Inside the house were flute players (Matt. 9:23); according to Mark 9:38 there was *thorubon kai klaiontas kai alalazontas polla*, "very loud tumultuous crying and shouting and wailing." It was a room packed with people making deafening noise and confusion. It was not at all like a modern American funeral. Such pandemonium was not conducive to the majestic, yet privately tender thing Jesus was about to do, so he "put them all outside" (Mk. 5:40). Actually, he ordered them outside (Gr. *ekbalon*, "threw out, drove, expelled" Mark 5:40, and *anachoreite*, "get out of here" in Matthew 9:24). While Jesus did not want to create even more pandemonium by raising the girl from the dead, he still wanted eyewitnesses to what he was going to do, so he kept the three disciples and the parents in the room. Why would Jesus say the child was "sleeping" when it was plain to everyone present she was dead? G. Campbell Morgan says, "From Christ's viewpoint that is not death which we call death. When the spirit has left the body, that is not death. Death is a deeper thing than that." Physical death is merely the separation of the spirit from the body. Jairus' daughter still lived, somewhere, in another existence, absent from the body of flesh (2 Cor. 5:1-10). Jesus wants everyone to know that the child is very much alive somewhere else, and that he has the power to bring her back from there to her fleshly body if he wishes. For Jesus, death is separation from God both in this life and in the next. Those not separated from God in this life will not be separated from him in the next, but will be at rest, at peace, in sweet awareness and security (Rev. 14:13). When Jesus spoke to this little 12-year-old girl, wherever she was, she heard and obeyed. When Jesus said, "She is sleeping..." the people laughed and scorned him. But what about afterward? Why did Jesus give her something to eat? To preclude anyone thinking it was a trick, or she was a ghost. Why tell her parents not to tell anyone? To keep the news from bringing thousands of others clamoring for him to raise their dead to life. The multitudes were already concentrating on physical miracles and shunning the spiritual. SOON THIS CRISIS WOULD COME TO A HEAD AT THE FEEDING OF THE 5000 (Jn. 6:26). The parents of the girl and all in that room were "stunned with ecstasy" (Mark 5:42 Greek, *exestesan euthus ekstasei megale*, "immediately astounded with awe"). They were "beside themselves" with astonishment and joy at what had been done! When the report of this miracle went throughout all that district (Matt. 9:26), Luke 9:7ff tells us that Jesus' great popularity as a miracle-worker precipitated an official inquiry by the murderous Herod Antipas and posed a problem for the further conduct of a public ministry (Lk. 9:11-17; Mk. 6:31-44; Matt. 14:13-21).

Jesus saw the multitudes and had compassion on them—AS PEOPLE! Because they were like sheep without a shepherd—confused, afraid, wandering, straying, in danger! The shepherd-heart sees each individual sheep. Jesus sees everyone in a crowd. Every ONE is important. We tend to deal with people en masse—as a herd—as a section of a city, etc. Kenneth Pike, in *With Heart and Mind*, says, “Men are collectors, God, too, is a collector in the sense that he likes variety and individuality. Even in heaven there is variety. On earth each individual is different from each other. If you have 5000 orchids, all of one kind, they would make a beautiful display. But after a visitor had looked at them, you would take him to see just one, set apart, and say, ‘This is my rarest orchid. There is only one of these....I had to travel far to get it. It cost me a lot of money and time.’ One convert may be like a rare orchid. He is an exhibit of the mercy of God poured forth in a way that has never been seen before. Can you not imagine God, in whose image we are created, taking Gabriel on a guided tour of his orchid garden in heaven. Perhaps he says, ‘Gabriel, look at this one! The workers who showed compassion on this one lived in a huge metropolis for 20 years, and they thought they had not succeeded in doing anything, but they got this individual. He is different. I have only one of these.’” Five thousand throng a hillside to see Jesus and hear him, but he has a conversation with Andrew and a boy who has brought his lunch. Here in chapter 9 of Matthew, surrounded by pressing throngs, pandemonium, scorning enemies, clamoring multitudes, JESUS SEES PEOPLE IN NEED, ONE AT A TIME! In Luke 7, Jesus at a dinner party in his honor, and of all the important contacts he could have been making, he has time only to single out a sinful woman and forgive her. Institution-mindedness often causes Christians to miss individuals. JESUS MADE NO SUCH MISTAKE. When Jesus saw the people he was moved with compassion because they were harassed and helpless. Do crowds of people really look that way? Do people seem to be “fainting” when you see them scurrying about in a busy shopping center? Do they look helpless at a downtown intersection? HARDLY! Because we don’t see them like Jesus sees them! When Jesus sees humanity, behind all the facade of activity and affluence, he sees the fainting hearts, the lonely lives, the helplessness. “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isa. 53:6). The people of Isaiah’s day and Jesus’ time and our time are not essentially different. Crowds look care-free and content. They are busily occupied. But using the word of God perhaps we can look behind the false front and see emptiness, guilt, harassment and helplessness. We must see no one from a human point of view ever again, if we are Christians (2 Cor. 5:16ff). WE MUST SEE THEM AS JESUS SEES THEM!

Who is so low that I am not his brother?

Who is so high that I have no path to him?

Who is so poor I may not feel his hunger?

Who is so rich I may not pity him?

Who is so hurt that I may not know his heartache?

Who sings for joy my heart may never share?

Who in God's heaven has passed beyond my vision?

Who in hell's depths where I may never fare?

Someone has said, "If a perfect man existed in a world such as ours, he would die of sorrow and compassion at the terrible things that happen in it every second." WELL, A PERFECT MAN DID EXIST, AND HE DID DIE...OUT OF COMPASSION FOR HIS BRETHREN—YOU AND ME! He identified with each one of us, low and high, rich and poor, hurting and singing. He had compassion on us and gave himself for us.

A compassionate Christ must act. He saw. He was moved. He healed and fed and taught. His compassion lead to action. He began no economic reform, initiated no political action, started no civil revolution or riot. His hands were given over to his enemies, laid on a cross, pierced by nails, torn in agony, hurt for a wearisome world. Edward John Carnell says, "...compassion and love are precisely the graces which men of the world can understand, if they do not comprehend doctrines. They are the graces about which there is no mystery, and they are within the reach of all the classes."

A compassionate Christ must teach. He saw. He was moved. He taught. He proclaimed the love of God—the good news of salvation. Edward John Carnell, again, "If it is true that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save sinners, have we any right to say that we love sinners if we fail to confront them with this truth? And where can we find a divinely validated account of this truth apart from scripture? In sum, we can express no higher love to lost humanity than to preach the Gospel in the precise form in which God has been pleased to reveal it."

My Prayer

by, Louisa May Alcott

To smooth the rough and thorny way
Where other feet begin to tread;

To feed some hungry soul each day
With sympathy's sustaining bread.

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 10:1- 11:30

SOME of the instructions in Matthew 10 are intended ONLY for the twelve apostles. We must be careful in our exegesis of this passage. But there are also some general principles for doing the work of evangelism here that apply all the time. Cultures and advances of technology do NOT make these principles obsolete. The church today would do well to re-evaluate itself in light of these principles. Principles to be applied in verses 5-15 are: (a) Jesus sent the 12 to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel”---the Christian’s mission is to every “lost sheep” within the immediate circle of their associations (friends, neighbors, family)—evangelism begins right where we are, to those nearest us; (b) Jesus sent the 12 to preach the kingdom of heaven—the Christian’s mission is to preach God’s word about God’s kingdom—not social or political panaceas. The mission is to make disciples, to bring people to repentance; and the validation for our message is even more emphatic than the miracles the 12 had—our’s is the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead tested by 2000 years of time during which there is no evidence to the contrary; (c) Jesus sent the 12 with instructions about how they were to present their message—Christians also need to understand they do not own the gospel, it was given to them, they will not be anyone’s final judge, they are merely stewards sent to proclaim it. All an evangelist really needs is the word of God, a mouth, feet and “lost sheep” for after all IT IS THE WORD THAT DOES THE WORK, not the methods, machines or eloquence of people; (d) there are so few laborers and so many who will hear that when anyone makes it plain they don’t want to hear we must “shake the dust” of the stubborn from our feet and go on. Even God gives up when men deliberately refuse to have him in their knowledge (Acts 13:46-47; Mat. 7:6; Rom. 1:18ff).

Christians today face many of the same dangers, in principle, as the 12 would face in 10:16-22: (a) having faith in Christ does not mean the Christian has withdrawn from reality—reality is needed in evangelism today—Jesus was honest with those he sent out and we must be honest about evangelism today. Christians should not waste their stewardship of life, they must guard it, use it up for as long as possible and in the best way possible, so Christ may get the most from it. It is often more demanding to stay alive than it is to die (Phil. 1:21-26); many would never have an opportunity to hear the gospel in foreign lands today had some missionaries and Christians not fled the threat of immediate death. He who endures to the end will be saved; (b) what Christ wanted preached he revealed to the 12—the success of the messenger does not depend on frail human powers but upon the Spirit-powered word of God revealed in its entirety in the Bible; the word has life in it like the seed sown in the soil---it has power like a sword to pierce even to the thoughts and intents of the human heart (where human psychology cannot reach); (c) it is enough for the servant to be like the Master—we are not Jesus’ disciples just to discuss with him his views and then decide what parts are acceptable to our thinking or feeling; we are his slaves to do his command without question; if it was not below the dignity of the Lord to be maligned, suffer privation and abuse and even death, then it surely is not below the dignity of his servants to

do so (Jn. 13:14-16; 15:20) in order to evangelize the world.

Three reasons a disciple should not fear to evangelize: (a) truth will ultimately prevail and that's all a Christian needs to know; (b) if we fear (i.e., reverence) God, we need have fear of nothing else, the body may be killed in this world but God can banish the soul to eternal death or save it to eternal life; (c) the Father will take care of his messengers—he is concerned about the most minute detail of each believer's life; he attaches value (he has them numbered) to each sparrow that falls and each hair of the believer's head—God has every star in the heavens named and calls them by name (Isa. 40:26); God's concern for and care of his people is not just “pie in the sky bye and bye,” BUT IN THE HERE AND NOW; God's evangelists must have the courage that is founded on the conviction that, whatever happens, he cannot be driven beyond the love and care of God (see Rom. 8:31-39).

In reality, the essence of all the principles of evangelism is: WHERE IS THE EVANGELIST'S LOYALTY? The Christian must decide whether his confession of Christ is TRUE or false. The Greek word homologesei, is translated “confess” and means literally, “to say the same as...to tell the truth about....to admit...to make a profession of.” Thus, to “confess” Christ is “to say the same about him” as the word of God, the Bible says. He is God's Son, God's only unique Son, Savior of the world, Lord and Judge of mankind. What a man thinks, says and lives, about Jesus is the only important issue of life or death! To decide incorrectly about Jesus automatically affects one's ability to evaluate life, the world, history and all other issues. NOT ONE THING IN ALL HUMAN EXPERIENCE CAN BE CORRECTLY UNDERSTOOD OR EVALUATED IF ONE DENIES WHAT THE BIBLE CLAIMS ABOUT CHRIST. The primary work of the church is that of “confessing” Christ before a lost world! (a) BECOMING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS DEMANDS NOT ABSOLUTE PERFECTION, BUT ABSOLUTE COMMITMENT! It has paternal, fraternal, and eternal consequences. Becoming an evangelist for Jesus demands a choice between him and friends, family, nation and world. Loyalty to Jesus involves inevitable enmity. The sword (struggle) of division, sacrifice, animosity is the lot of the messenger of Christ. The aim of Christianity is not maintaining the secular “status quo”—its aim is to disturb, humiliate, change, separate others from worldliness, chasten and mature them into the image of Jesus Christ. Christianity is absolutely individualistic—it is not patriarchal, provincial or familial. ONE MUST, IF NECESSARY, SEVER THE DEAREST RELATIONSHIPS ON EARTH TO BE HIS DISCIPLE. To love anyone or anything above God and Christ is idolatry; (b) there must also be death to “self”—this is what “take up his cross” means. No Christian can ever again do what he likes, he must do what Christ likes. When Christ died, all Christians died to “self” (2 Cor. 5:14-21; Gal. 2:20-21). The statement of Jesus ... “he who loses his life for my sake will find it” becomes the real test of faith. Do we really believe that surrender of self for others is where real identity and real life is found? “Take up one's cross” is not just martyrdom (or a literal death on a cross), yet it is something very real that our discipleship and salvation depends upon (Lk. 14:27). It is not just the sum total of the pains and difficulties that assault the Christian throughout his life. Lots of people suffer without ever intending for one moment to “bear the cross.” It means that by faith we have accepted Jesus' death in our place, and acknowledged therefore that “we” are dead—and we have

accepted his life to live in place of our own. The great preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, “If the kingdom is ever to come—and come it will—it never will come through a few ministers, missionaries, or evangelists preaching the Gospel. It must come through everyone of you preaching it in the shop and by the fireside, when walking abroad and when sitting in the chamber. You must all of you be always endeavoring to save some. I would enlist you all afresh...and bind anew the King’s colors upon you.”

Lord, give me a passion for the lost,
For souls so deep in sin,
That I may lead them to the Cross—
That one You died to win!

Give me a burden for that heart
Bowed down in deep despair.
Then come, dear Lord, and heal the wound
That sin has planted there.

Lord, lay someone upon my heart—
Give me the grace to go
And tell them of Thy saving power,
And how You love them so!
—F. W. Davis

Matthew, chapter 11, is another “grouping” of events for the purpose of presenting “subject matter” rather than chronology. These events took place in Capernaum (mid—A. D. 27), after the raising of the widow’s son at Nain. Most of the events of Matthew chapters 8-9-10 take place after chapter 11. Christ has been emphasizing the SPIRITUAL nature of the Messianic kingdom; this contradicted many human theories of the kingdom of God and many people began to have doubts about Jesus and become indifferent toward his message. The correct chronological order for these events may be found in Luke 7:18-35; 10:13-15; 10:21-22. Matthew’s chapter 11 deals with attitudes toward the messianic message—confusion, 11:1-6; curiosity, 11:7-15; childishness, 11:16-19; carelessness, 11:20-24; challenge, 11:25-27; compassion, 11:28-30. There are great lessons to be learned by all of Christ’s disciples in this chapter.

John the Baptist's perplexity may have been partially induced by his loneliness and depression in prison. He was in a dungeon called Machaerus. The fortress was over 100 years old, built in 90 B.C. by Alexander Jannaeus (one of the Maccabean/Hasmoneans). Out in the desolate wilderness 5 miles from the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, about midway north/south. It was the 2nd most important fortress in Palestine; fortified by Herod the Great, used in John's day by Herod Antipas as a "summer home" and for the imprisonment of political prisoners. The Greek word used in Matt. 11:2 is *desmoterio*, meaning "Place of bonds and fetters" (the usual Greek word for prison is *phulake*, "cage"). John the Baptist was probably chained or in stocks. He was there about a year before he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question. He was on "death row" expecting death at any moment—that has tremendous psychological power to cause depression! We also know from scripture that Herod was constantly sending to have John brought before him to talk—perhaps to taunt or badger him about this "so-called Messiah" in whom John had put so much faith and energy. John had plenty of time to reflect on the comparison between what he had declared about the coming Messiah and what Jesus had actually done. John was confused because he imagined Christ would conduct his kingdom program along the lines that he, John the Baptist, had enunciated earlier—the Messiah would "lay the axe to the root of the tree" and hew down every Jewish ruler that did not produce the fruit of repentance. When John heard that Jesus was doing nothing of the sort of program he imagined, but rather going about healing, cheering, blessing, consorting with both publicans and Pharisees, John the Baptist wanted to know if there might be Messiah of a different kind yet to come. John had too much evidence to regard Jesus as an imposter—he had no problem with the fact that Jesus was sent from God as one kind of Messiah—John told his disciple-messengers to ask, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" While Luke 7:19-20 used the Greek word *allon* for "another" (meaning, "another kind of the same Person ...") Matthew 11:3 used the word *heteron* for "another" (meaning, "one of another kind"). John's problem was not one of doubt but of impatience. Remember, it was Elijah, who insisted that God manifest himself in some judgmental form ("wind and fire") against Jezebel, but Elijah found that God speaks in "a still, small voice" as well as tempests. John was the "Elijah who was to come" (Matt. 11:14). Many have made the same mistake. James and John wanted fire from heaven against the Samaritans; Habakkuk was confused over God's predicted use of the Babylonians to punish the chosen people; Jonah was sure God would destroy Nineveh; even the great apostle Paul tried to run ahead of God (Acts 16:6). Some Christian people are still perplexed over the "way of the kingdom." Jesus said the kingdom is like a man who scatters seed on the ground and goes to sleep and rises in the morning day after day, and the seed sprouts and grows, and the sower does not know how it all happened! It is first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear (Mark 4:26-29). Yet many Christians become impatient with the slow, gradual, developmental processes of the "seed" (the word of God) and want to take things into their own hands and "make" the kingdom "grow"—faster, larger, more spectacularly. **BUT THAT IS NOT THE WAY OF THE KINGDOM!** We wonder sometimes why God doesn't hurry up and judge the wicked, destroy the enemies of righteousness, bring in the kingdom by force and power—this would cause many to wake up and repent—we muse! Don't count on it (read Rev. 9:20-21; 16:9). The way of the kingdom is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord" (Zech. 4:6). The way of the

kingdom is like leaven—just a little “pinch”; it starts small and unassuming like a mustard seed! There is no “blessing” in trying to “rush” the work of the word of God or trying to “force” the work of the word. Christians get themselves all worked up----they fret and fume and drive themselves and others; they rack their brains on how to entertain, please, seduce, scare, institutionalize people into Christ WHEN ALL THE TIME GOD HAS SAID, “YOU PLANT, ANOTHER WILL WATER, AND I WILL GIVE THE INCREASE.”

Jesus challenges the initial motives of all the superficial people who first went out to see and hear John the Baptist: (a) either they expected a fickle, unstable, vacillating “good-old-boy” who would bend with the ebb and flow of human opinion like a reed in the wind (like so many modern American politicians and religious leaders); (b) or they expected a preacher who was self-indulgent, fawning after those in positions of human power like Herod’s courtiers fawning after the Romans—JESUS’ RHETORICAL QUESTION IMPLIES THAT ONE OF THE TWO WAS WHAT THE MULTITUDES INDEED WAS EXPECTING FROM THIS “PROPHET OF THE WILDERNESS.” However, John the Baptist was no vacillating, self-indulgent pawn of human tyrants—he would bend for no one, not even a king! John was indeed a prophet—but MORE than a prophet! He was the forerunner of the Messiah (Isa. 40:1ff; Mal. 3:1ff), predicted by the ancient prophets of Israel. He held a special place of service in God’s redemptive program (Lk. 16:16). Jesus added this epitaph (to which a literal Greek translation adds idiomatic emphasis), “I tell you, greater among those born of women than John, no one is!” This applies not only to John’s position as forerunner, but to John’s personal character. Jesus said John the Baptist was the greatest man in the human race (besides Jesus himself, of course). That statement certainly minimizes much of what the world calls “greatness!” John had none of the trappings of worldly power, wealth, sophistication, travel, education, longevity and yet among those born of women, not a greater has ever lived! Yet whoever is least in the kingdom of God is greater than John! Those who have become Christians have their covenant enacted upon better promises (Heb. 8:6). Those who believe in Christ after the cross and resurrection and the ministry of the Holy Spirit have seen God as John could never have seen him! As great as John’s position and character was, those who believe in the Christ after him have a much greater privilege. The phrase, “The law and the prophets were until John....” does not mean that the OT was abrogated when John the Baptist appeared; nor does it mean that the kingdom of God (the church) was instituted, in fact, with the preaching of John the Baptist! It is plain from the NT that the church was instituted on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Jesus is emphasizing that John the Baptist’s appearance in history heralded that the anticipatory nearness of the long-awaited kingdom of God had arrived—its official inauguration only needed the death and resurrection of the Messiah. The arrival of John the Baptist and his message (i.e., immersion in water for repentance unto the remission of sins, Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) was, in reality, a “parenthetical dispensation” of God’s grace (Lk. 16:16). It stood between the Law of Moses and the Christian era which began on the Day of Pentecost. John’s message was revolutionary, starkly-innovative. Until John’s preaching, God had ordained that the Jew was to seek repentance and remission of sins through animal and crop sacrifices in the temple. John, sent from God, preached a religious “system” that would, if continued, set aside the law of animal sacrifices for remission of sins! Luke 16:16 indicates that what John the

Baptist was preaching would cause people to “ENTER THE KINGDOM VIOLENTLY” (i.e., the Jews would have to “violently” shed their centuries old method of seeking remission of sins, repent {change their minds} and merely be immersed in water for forgiveness of sins— AND THAT WOULD BE A “VIOLENT” REVOLUTION IN THEIR RELIGIOUS THINKING AND ACTING). Evidently, however, Jesus means something different here in Matthew 11:12 when he says, “From the days of John the Baptist (i.e., from his preaching days until his imprisonment) until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force.” Just as soon as John the Baptist appeared on the scene preaching that “the kingdom of God is at hand,” the Herodians, the Pharisees and the Sadducees all began to conspire to take God’s kingdom, by any violence necessary, and do with it what they pleased (see the parable of the wicked husbandmen, Matt. 21:33-43). They recognized they would have to even kill the King of heaven’s kingdom to get it! And, as great a man as John the Baptist was, he was tempted to lay “violent” hands on the kingdom and reshape it into his own ideas of how it ought to be administered. According to his way of thinking Jesus should be “laying the axe to the root of the tree” and baptizing a lot of people in fire. THIS IS AN EVER PRESENT DANGER TO PREACHERS AND ELDERS. MEN WANT TO LAY “VIOLENT” HANDS ON GOD’S KINGDOM AND RESHAPE IT INTO SOME STRUCTURED CORPORATION THAT WOULD CONFORM TO WORLDLY METHODS AND GOALS.

Jesus said to the multitude, “If you are willing, this (John the Baptist) is Elijah that is to come.” That statement is the KEY to the entire 11th chapter of Matthew— WILLINGNESS TO BE TAUGHT! It is the crux of John the Baptist’s problem as he sits in prison; the crux of the failure of the Jewish people to accept John’s ministry or Jesus’ ministry; the crux of the impenitence of the three cities; the crux of the problem in grasping God’s revelation in his Son (11:25-30). Willingness to receive REVELATION from God is a fundamental issue in Christianity; it is the fundamental issue in the judgment of the whole human race. Teachableness is not a matter of the understanding, as if God’s revelation were unclear—it is a matter of the human will! The plain fact is: when people do not want to listen to the truth, they will easily enough find an excuse for not listening to it. They will criticize the same person or institution from quite opposite grounds according to their whims or circumstances. Jesus sets up this picture in our minds—here are two groups of children playing games. One group is playing “wedding” and the other group is playing “funeral.” A third group is not yet playing at all. The “funeral group” represents the ministry of John the Baptist—severe, austere, ascetic, mournful. The “wedding group” represents the ministry of Jesus—gracious, sociable, joyful, merry. The third group represents the fickle Jewish populace; they do not want to play either game. Many of those to whom the invitation to become citizens of the kingdom was extended (“to play the game”) stubbornly refused to do so. They didn’t want John’s austerity, but when Jesus came preaching grace and joy, they said the kingdom will surely not be like that. They would not repent with John the Baptist nor rejoice with Christ. This is deliberate fickleness—they required of John the Baptist what they condemned in Jesus—and demanded of Jesus what they condemned in John. It is an attitude with serious implications because it is a manifestation of a totally selfish heart—total disregard of spiritual values. It is actually what Jesus pictured it to be—sheer petulant brattiness and childishness. Such people are spoiled, immature, unreasonable because if the “game” is not played their

way—they won't play at all. BUT "WISDOM IS JUSTIFIED BY HER CHILDREN." The wisdom of a ministry is justified by what is produced in the lives of those who practice its teaching! Jesus said, "If any man be willing to do God's will, he will know whether my teaching is from God or not" Jn. 7:17. Of course, the message of Jesus is true whether men try it or not. The Gospel is not true because it works—IT WORKS BECAUSE IT IS TRUE! But people will never know in their own experience how real and good and true the Gospel is until they have practiced it! There are lots of people today who criticize Christianity (e.g., multi-millionaire Ted Turner) because it is too severe—and when they are reminded that the Gospel is the grace of God which is a life of joy, they say they don't want a religion that has no austerity, legalism and asceticism. And almost every critic of Christianity is someone who has never really trusted Jesus' word and entered into covenant relationship with him and given the Holy Spirit opportunity to produce the practical fruits of faith in their lives. THEY WILL NEVER KNOW WHAT THEY ARE MISSING UNTIL THEY "PLAY THE GAME." They will continue to blame their unwillingness to play the game on the game itself. Some do enter half-heartedly into the "game" but when it doesn't go their way, they "take their marbles and go home," saying, "I didn't like your game in the first place."

Men must be free to make their own choices. Jesus allowed the three cities (the people in and around them) (Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum) to choose for or against his divine wisdom and demonstrations of supernatural power. This area was his "headquarters"—he had healed a nobleman's son in Cana; healed a man of paralysis; given the disciples a miraculous catch of fish; healed many of all kinds of diseases; cast out a demon from a man in a synagogue; healed Peter's mother-in-law; healed many again; healed the centurion's servant; later he would still the tempest on the sea of Galilee; raise Jairus' daughter from death; heal a woman with a hemorrhage; heal two blind men and a dumb demoniac—most of Jesus' great sermons were preached in this vicinity SO JESUS' CONDEMNATION OF THESE CITIES IS DIRECTED TOWARD MISAPPROPRIATION OF OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES—THE MOST EVIL FORM OF UNBELIEF. Jesus never condemned anyone for failing to use an opportunity they never had! But he certainly had his severest judgment upon those who had opportunities and privileges and deliberately chose not to use them for the kingdom (e.g., the 7 letters to the 7 specific churches in Asia Minor—Revelation chapters 2 and 3). If Jesus walked in San Francisco, New York, and Dallas today would he condemn them? If he walked in your home town today, would he condemn it? If he walked in your neighborhood, or your home—would he condemn it? ARE YOU LIVING ACCORDING TO THE OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES YOU HAVE? But the astounding thing is—Jesus had failed to win over those cities wherein most of his labor had been expended, and yet he gives thanks! (Matt. 11:25). The Greek word is *exomologoumai*, primary meaning is "I acknowledge" (its secondary meaning is "to praise"). Jesus is really saying, "I make acknowledgment with praise...." He is acknowledging and praising the Father that in the refusal of these cities to accept his discipleship, God's plan for saving the teachable was working. SOME CHRISTIANS, WHEN GREAT MASSES DO NOT RESPOND TO THE TRUTH, GET DISCOURAGED, BEGIN TO DOUBT THE POWER OF THE WORD, START COMPROMISING BY USING UNETHICAL, SHALLOW AND PAGAN METHODS AND MESSAGES TO COMPENSATE. Harold Fowler says, Matthew, Vol. II, p.

56, "The things which caused the Lord Jesus to rejoice and give thanks, should give us reason to reflect upon what pleases us. His strange thanksgiving challenges us to inquire into our easy satisfaction with those irrelevant, superficial symbols of success." If you do your best, if you are faithful to preach the whole counsel of God in your life and the visible results are like those of Jesus here—rejoice, God is still your Father! Temporary set backs, however heartbreaking, cannot defeat God! Rejoice that God's plan of salvation leaves human beings capable of choice and does not turn them into unthinking, unfeeling, unwilling robots or things. Rejoice that God is interested in quality as well as quantity—AND NOT JUST QUANTITY WITHOUT QUALITY! Jesus' response to the rejection of the cities is a challenge to Christians to be "childlike." It is the Father's gracious will that ONLY THOSE WHO ARE "BABES" WILL ACCEPT HIS SON AND HIS SALVATION! Jesus makes it unequivocally a condition of kingdom citizenship that "unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3-4). A "babe" is one who is (a) honest enough to admit he does not know everything; (b) open and willing to learn from anyone; (c) able to distinguish truth from error—precious from worthless; (d) able to evaluate by the evidence and not distort the evidence to suit their own preconceptions and rationalizations; (e) acknowledge that their lives are unmanageable without a Father's guidance. REVELATION—that is the crucial issue in regeneration. WHAT MEN ARE WILLING TO HAVE TOLD TO THEM BY GOD IS THE ISSUE: AS OPPOSED TO WHAT MEN THINK THEY ALREADY KNOW AND REFUSE TO LET ANYONE TELL THEM. If men believe they already know all there is to know that is significant about life here and hereafter, then revelation to them is impossible. GOD'S WORD IS HIDDEN FROM THOSE WHO THINK THEY DON'T NEED IT! Regeneration is not determined by "how you feel"—it is determined by whether you believe and obey God's revelation or not! Feeling may be a consequence of regeneration, but it does not prove regeneration: Fact, Testimony, Faith, Feeling—in that order! Surrender of the mind and will to the revelation of God produces regeneration. The people in the area of these 3 cities wanted Jesus to heal them and make their bodies feel good—to feed them and make their stomachs feel good—to entertain them with miracles and charge up their emotions, but they did not want to surrender to his teachings in their everyday living, or accept his vicarious death for their sins. HAVE YOU REALLY ACCEPTED THE REVELATION THAT JESUS DIED FOR YOUR SINS—OR ARE YOU TRYING TO WORK YOUR WAY INTO HEAVEN? HAVE YOU ACCEPTED THE REVELATION OF GOD FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIPS TO YOUR FELLOW MAN—TOWARD HUMAN INSTITUTIONS—FOR YOUR MARRIAGE? What are you doing about the revealed will of God about your life as a disciples (learner)—what it says in the Bible?! ARE YOU LETTING GOD TELL YOU—OR DO YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT WHAT YOU OUGHT TO DO WITH YOUR LIFE AND HOW IT SHOULD BE RUN? If you're waiting for another revelation—if you think somehow Christ should come back from above or below or wherever he is and say something else—THEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT ROMANS CH. 10 SAYS! THE WORD OF FAITH—THE REVELATION OF GOD—ALL THERE IS UNTO SALVATION—IS NEAR YOU—IN YOUR VERY PRESENCE—IN YOUR VERY HAND—IN THE APOSTOLIC MESSAGE—IN THE BIBLE! That's the only place it is; and that's all there will be in this world!

All through this text this Jesus, this audacious, itinerant, Galilean rabbi of fishermen, has claimed the authority to pronounce judgment on entire cities! He has claimed the exclusive right and power to reveal God to whomever he chooses and however he chooses! Finally he has claimed the power to give to anyone who wants, rest for their troubled, burdened and weary psyches (souls)! He has promised to give what Solomon and millions like Solomon could not find in pleasure, wisdom, possessions, great works, entertainment (Eccl. 2:23). He has claimed to do what psychiatry, philosophy, governments of all kinds, science, and a thousand “religions” have not been able to do. MONEY, POWER, INDULGENCE, MYSTICISM, STOICISM, ASCETICISM HAVE ALL BEEN TRIED AND FOUND WANTING—TRIED OVER AND OVER AND OVER, IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES AND ALL TIMES—STILL WANTING! And this “uneducated” rabbi offers it! What impertinence—to claim to provide the most sought after yet un-attained goal known to the human race! EITHER THIS MAN IS GOD OR THE WORLD’S MOST PREPOSTEROUS CHARLATAN! What is it he offers? He offers REST. His “rest” is his “yoke” (the Greek word for “yoke” is zugon, and describes the heavy wooden cross-bar worn by oxen in the first century). To say a “yoke” is synonymous with “rest” sounds at best paradoxical and almost like an oxymoron! But if Jesus says it, it must be true! Then, to top off the oxymoron, Jesus says his “yoke” is “easy”! The Greek word for “easy” is chrestos (sometimes translated “gentle”) but means essentially, “fit for use, good, purposeful.” W. E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, says, “Christ’s rest is not a rest from work, but in work...not the rest of inactivity but of the harmonious working of all the faculties and affections....because each has found in God the ideal sphere for its satisfaction and development.” Christ’s “rest” is the rest the OT prophets predicted (e.g., Isa. 26:3) would be found in the Messiah and his kingdom. It is the rest the writer of Hebrews says the Hebrew-Christians of the first century were then entering into (Heb. chs. 3-4)—and they weren’t exactly sitting back relaxing in their rocking chairs (read Acts and all the Epistles). It is a rest of yoked-discipleship that refreshes the soul...actually it is a new birth—a regeneration. THERE IS NO REAL REST OUTSIDE THE “WORK” OF CHRIST. CHRIST CANNOT GIVE YOU HIS DIVINE COMPASSION UNLESS YOU TAKE HIS “YOKE” UPON YOU. ANYONE WHO THINKS A RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST MEANS EASY LIVING, SELF-INDULGENCE, CESSATION OF STRUGGLE, OR HAVING EVERYTHING DONE FOR THEM DOESN’T KNOW WHAT REST IS! There is no real compassion without work. You cannot be compassionate toward someone by taking away all their labor. You may help and encourage, but to take away work takes away dignity, purpose, satisfaction, fulfillment and identity! This is where the socialistic, big-brother, government fails! Welfare—true welfare, involves work! Even the Holy Spirit is only a “Strengtheners” not a supernatural “genie-slave” to work you a miracle every time you come up against a struggle, or an unpleasant task in your discipleship. The only way to find “rest” is to DO THE WORK OF CHRIST! Government officials and social activists talk about social unrest, political unrest, restless people and it isn’t that people aren’t trying to find rest and peace—BUT THEY ARE LOOKING IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES—THEY NEED TO BE DOING THE WORK OF CHRIST TO FIND REST! Jesus Christ was the most “rested,” peaceful being ever to walk this earth because he was perfectly yoked to the work of God! Have you found the yoke of Christ’s purpose for your life? Do you have his aims and goals for living? Have you made a

firm decision to surrender to being yoked to his purpose? And what is his purpose? “GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL THE NATIONS...” THAT’S HIS PURPOSE. That is why he died! That is why he rose again! That is why he instituted the church! That is why he revealed the New Testament and caused it to be recorded and preserved! That is why he made the message available to YOU so YOU might become a disciple! That is why we are here his very moment—there is no other reason for us to be here!

The little orphaned, son-of-a-slave, George Washington Carver was teaching at Iowa State University when he got a letter from Booker T. Washington, president of a struggling Negro college in Tuskegee, Alabama. “I cannot offer you money, position, or fame—the first two you have—the last, from the place you now occupy, you will no doubt achieve. These things I now ask you to give up. I offer you in their place work—hard, hard work—the task of bringing a people from degradation, poverty, and waste to full manhood.” Dr. Carver took Booker T’s offer, and the rest is history. During the years Mr. Carver worked so long and hard and made so many great scientific discoveries he was offered what would now be millions of dollars in salaries to work for Thomas Edison, Henry Ford and many, many others. But Carver chose to live in the South, living in relative poverty, wearing the same suit for 40 years, forgetting to cash salary checks, forgetting everything but his complete dedication to helping his people. Many people argued with him that he could help his people if he had all the money Edison and Ford offered him. He always answered, “If I had all that money I might forget about my people.” And on his tombstone were carved fitting words: “He could have added fortune to fame, but caring for neither, he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world.”

WHAT ARE WE DOING WITH OUR OPPORTUNITIES? LET’S REALLY GET “YOKED” TO JESUS!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 12:1-13:58

Opposition to Jesus reached a “boiling point” when the events in Matthew 12 and 13 took place. Even in Galilee the Pharisees had agitated the multitudes to “forsake” Jesus. His ministry in both word and work compelled people to take sides either for him or against him. The Pharisees stood directly against him—and actually devised schemes by which they could have him killed. Matthew placed these events (chapters 12-13) out of chronological order. These events mostly took place before those which Matthew recorded in his chapters 8-9-10—and part of 11. Mark, chapters 3-4-5-6 has the proper chronological order! But Matthew chapters 12-13 given some striking illustrations of the way in which both enemies and friends of Jesus presented opposition to his “Way.”

The disciples were hungry and it was the Sabbath. God made hunger. God made food. And God made the Sabbath. What shall they do? They plucked some grain (wheat) and rolled it around in their hands to get the chaff off, and ate it (like I used to do on my Grandpa’s farm). Jesus could have worked a miracle to provide food—BUT HE DIDN’T. Jesus could have rebuked the disciples—BUT HE DIDN’T. Therefore, Jesus apparently approved of what they did! Jesus must either condemn his 12 apostles or contradict the Pharisees. Jesus was being dared to take a stand for or against the most passionately revered institution of Judaism—THE SABBATH! Many of the Pharisees were blatant hypocrites about the Sabbath. They wanted others to be very austere and ascetic while they often feasted and indulged themselves on the Sabbath (Lk. 14:1-6). The Greek biographer Plutarch (AD. 46-119) writes, “The Hebrews (Pharisees) honor the Sabbath chiefly by inviting each other to drinking and intoxication.” Nevertheless, the Pharisees charged, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful...” (Matt. 12:2). However (a) the Mosaic Law, in fact, permits this action without restriction as to the day—apparently it does not consider “rubbing” a handful of grain to be “harvesting-work”(Deut. 23:24-25); (b) God’s law would not contradict itself—his law would not give specific directions that plucking grain should be done and then prohibit it by another statute; (c) the Sabbath laws were not being broken because, in addition its other purposes, the Sabbath was a day for “doing good” to those in dire need (Ex. 23:12ff; Deut. 5:12-15); (d) even their OT sanctioned disobedience of an actual Mosaic statute in order to keep the very spirit of the law itself—mercy, e.g., a starving David (1 Sam. 21:1-6) ate the Bread of the Presence from the Tabernacle when only priests were permitted to do so (Lev. 24:9)—the Sabbath was made for man—not man for the Sabbath—God’s laws were not intended to starve people to death; (e) the priests and all Jews violated the Sabbath in order to circumcise a male child of Israel for what they considered the most holy work of all—therefore, even they believed there were some things “higher” than the Sabbath. (f) Finally, Jesus straightforwardly told them that he was greater than the temple—he is claiming ownership of the temple and ownership of the Sabbath. If he is greater than the temple, then he is Lord of, and greater than, the Sabbath! And Jesus declares, “It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath!” The OT had already declared it (Deut. 5:12-15). The Pharisees reacted by

refusing to answer Jesus' challenge; they hardened their hearts; they went out of their minds with rage; and they plotted with the Herodians to kill Jesus (see Mark 3:4-6). Jesus teaches us here: (a) human need takes precedence over any ritual, custom or religious practice; (b) work in God's service is permitted, yea, even called "lawful" on the Sabbath; (c) God's interpretation of his law is more lenient than man's; (d) the Sabbath was made for man—not man for the Sabbath—in one sense, man is "lord of the Sabbath"; (e) no time or institution is so sacred that it cannot be used to help a fellow man in need—we will be judged by the good we've done and the people we've helped (Matt. 25). It is not strange that when Christ was attempting to correct error and relieve suffering and throw off the burdens of legalism people should be so violently opposed to him—because the motive for such violence is much deeper than mere Sabbath rules—IT IS A QUESTION OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER MAN! Does God have absolute wisdom and authority to tell man what to do and demand obedience, or shall man do what he pleases?

The Pharisees charged, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man (Jesus) casts out demons." In Greek the devil's name is Beelzeboul, and means, "lord of the dung heap." It is important to note here that the Pharisees did not deny the miraculous nature of what Jesus did. Miracles do not have the power to overrule people's will or power of choice. Miracles are merely confirmatory. Belief comes by "hearing" the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). People must want to hear before they really hear unto belief. When people do NOT want to hear, no amount of miracles will change their minds! THE LOGIC IN JESUS' ANSWER IS INCONTROVERTIBLE! First, he says, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Any one or thing divided against itself cannot stand! Satan would not empower Jesus and then let him go around preaching goodness, truth, repentance, obedience to God's law and helping cure those who were hurting! Two contradictory positions cannot both be right—one of the fundamental laws of all logical thinking! It cannot be logically reconciled that Satan and his helpers would hate good and hate evil or do good and do evil both! Second Jesus said, "What about your 'sons' (followers)—by whom do they claim power to exorcize demons?" Jewish exorcists didn't really have the power to do so (Acts 19:11ff), they only thought they did! Jesus is saying, "If your followers exorcize demons by God's power, in contrast to me, why do your followers not come forth and challenge my power and prove conclusively it is not like theirs? If your followers exorcize demons by Satan's power, then they are condemned, and so are you Pharisees, by your own condemnation of my works." Third, Jesus had demonstrated his power over Satan by "entering Satan's house (i.e., realm), and "plundering his goods and binding him." So, Jesus pointed out that the only reasonable explanation of his work was that it was from God. Either he expelled demons by God's power or by Satan's power—he had shown them the logical absurdity of the last alternative so they were left with only one alternative. God's kingdom had come upon them and they were refusing to acknowledge it! Jesus is giving them a solemn warning that they have just been confronted with the presence and power of the Rule of God! They are standing in open rebellion in the very face of the King of kings, and Lord of lords! He is Lord even of Satan! Jesus had literally, empirically, historically proved he was Master of Satan by casting out demons and giving them orders and having them obey him—right before their eyes! They could not demonstrate anything to the contrary—all they could do was slander him. Jesus is

not the servant or tool of Satan—Jesus proved to be Satan’s Master by (a) destroying the devil’s works, 1 Jn. 3:8; (b) triumphing historically and empirically over the devil and his hosts, Col. 2:15; (c) destroying the devil’s power, Heb. 2:14-15; (d) his death and resurrection which cast the pretended “ruler” of this world out and judged him, Jn. 12:31; 16:11; (e) making the devil flee from the faithful believer, James 4:7; (f) “binding” the devil which Jesus did when he destroyed those (the adversarial Jewish nation and the Roman empire) helping the devil to try to stamp out his church Rev. 20:6; Matt. 12:29—the “binding of Satan” has already taken place (see my comments on the “binding of Satan” in my book, *Approaching the New Millennium*, A. D. 2000, 1998, College Press, pp. 236-242).

This has been a much debated theological question! What is the “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit”—or as some have renamed it, “The Unpardonable Sin.” The Pharisees had aligned themselves with Satan by calling the good work Jesus did an evil work of Satan! ANYONE WITH A BRAIN IN THEIR HEAD AND AN OUNCE OF COMPASSION IN THEIR HEART WOULD ACKNOWLEDGE THAT RELIEVING A MAN OF DEMON POSSESSION WAS A GOOD, GODLY, WORK! Note, first, “every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven except one.” All the vilest of sins of all the vile people in the world may be forgiven, except ONE! There is only one sin which will never be forgiven (Mk. 3:29) and that is the “sin against the Holy Spirit.” Jesus said that even “every one who speaks a word against the Son of man may be forgiven” (Lk. 12:10). While Jesus walked the earth in a human body, the completed revelation of his deity had not been fully and undeniably demonstrated. But the time came when God’s redemptive plan was so unquestionably validated and the deity of his Son so unequivocally confirmed, that to deliberately refuse him would be to commit the unpardonable sin. Before the resurrection men might say a word against the Son of man and stumble at the idea of God dwelling in flesh. They might continue to have doubts about Jesus while he was in the flesh that would even lead some of them to crucify him (Lk. 23:34; Acts 3:17; 13:27; 17:30).—BUT NOT AFTER HIS RESURRECTION. Ever since the Holy Spirit came in his ministry of validating the deity of Jesus, everyone who hears or reads the account should believe in Jesus and repent (Acts 17:30-31) and they will be forgiven—even of speaking a word against the Son of man. But anyone, after Christ’s resurrection, who speaks against the testimony of the Holy Spirit (which is historically, undeniably, confirmed) and says that Jesus’ work is the work of the devil, they will never be forgiven (Heb. 6:1-8; 10:1-31)—THAT’S BECAUSE THE ONLY REPENTANCE GOD WILL ACCEPT, AFTER JESUS’ RESURRECTION, IS THROUGH THE NAME OF JESUS AND HIS NEW COVENANT TERMS (THE NEW TESTAMENT)! To seek justification before God through any religious system other than New Testament Christianity is to call “evil” what God has called—through his Holy Spirit—“GOOD” and call “good” what God—through his Holy Spirit—has called “evil.” The worst evil in the world is not fornication, stealing or lying—not even murder—but calling the work of God’s Son and his Spirit, “evil,” and calling that which opposes God’s Spirit, “good.” This is what the people of Isaiah’s day did (Isa. 5:20; see also Prov. 17:15; Amos 5:7; Matt. 6:22-23; Lk. 1:33-35). To have stumbled at the Incarnation while the Son was still in the flesh (even his own disciples did this) was pardonable, but to contradict and deny the undeniable, incontrovertible work of the Holy Spirit is unpardonable. No person can be forgiven who takes such a perverse stand as to hate what is

unquestionably the work of a good God and call it evil—neither here nor in eternity! And there are still people in our world who do so (e.g., France’s Francois Marie Arouet Voltaire, Germany’s Karl Marx; Russia’s Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin; Great Britain’s Sir Bertrand Russell America’s “lost” Madalyn Murray O’Hair and Ted Turner). There is no such thing as spiritual neutrality! If a person in the world today, who has had the opportunity to read a Bible, does not take a stand for Christ, such a person is for the devil! Jesus said it (Matt. 12:30)—ANYONE NOT ALIGNED WITH CHRIST IN MAKING PEOPLE WHOLE IS ALIGNED WITH THE DEVIL WHOSE WORK IS TO “SCATTER” OR SHATTER!

“Jesus did not blast the minds of men with one blinding explosion of truth. He let it dawn on men in parables. He made them like stained glass so men would not be blinded but blessed with color.”—Redding. The “seed” is the word of God (see parallel Lk. 8:11); the “sower” is Christ—and anyone else who preaches or teaches the word; the “soil” is, like the “field (Matt. 13:38),” the world of lost, unproductive (for God) minds of human beings. THE PROBLEM OF KINGDOM-PROCLAMATION LIES NOT IN THE SOWER OR THE SEED—BUT IN THE SOIL! (a) The “wayside-soil” is the cold, indifferent, closed mind—the person who has exposed his mind as a common road to every evil influence of the world until it has become as hard as pavement; this person is apathetic toward the word of God leaving it to lie unnoticed, outside his consciousness; this is the person with a dulled conscience, jaded sentimentality, perverse will and prejudiced intellect—hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; YES! the word of God can be absolutely resisted—there is a real devil who will help people resist God’s word; this “soil” warns all starry-eyed, excessively optimistic Christians who expect the proclamation of the kingdom to be crowned with instant success that there will be some absolute failures—no matter who preaches it, the word of God cannot penetrate the surface of a mind paved over with indifference to truth; (b) the “rocky-soil” is the shallow topsoil covering a slab of rock that roots cannot penetrate; it symbolizes the superficial enthusiasm that does not count the cost of discipleship; it makes commitments instantly on the basis of feelings then when trouble comes, commitment withers; it has no strength of character, no long-range goals, a creature of the moment; it must be continually “inspired” to continue in discipleship; it is not able to handle persecution, failure, loneliness, criticism; this “soil” teaches us that steadfastness and stability is necessary to be a Christian—to produce fruit, one must have spiritual roots, a disciplined will, well trained conscience, control of one’s emotions, and honesty to face truth wherever it is—the Spirit of God must dominate the flesh; (c) the “thorny soil” has potential because that which will grow thorns will grow wheat, but this soil is over-grown with thorns so any wheat trying to grow is choked out; this symbolizes the pre-occupied individual—too busy and too double-minded to produce for God according to its potential; in Hebrews 5:11—6:12 the “well-watered, cultivated” land producing thorns is symbolic of the Christian who lets concern for worldly Judaism (in this case) choke out the true religion, Christianity, which is spiritual; thorns grow gradually (Lk. 8:7, 14) along with wheat until the wheat is choked out; worldliness grows gradually, not all at once; the “thorns” are the cares which the world cares about—the deceptive seduction that comes from wealth, the have-more-ness of greed, the unadulterated hedonism (see James 4:1-4) that demands “the good times” and is so often occupied with what seems necessary, it neglects the one imperative; (d) the “good soil” is the honest and good heart (Lk. 8:11); it symbolizes the mind

that hears, understands, accepts, and holds the Word fast and obeys (i.e., “brings forth fruit”) (see Matt. 13:23; Mk. 4:20; Lk. 8:15); this “soil” is the person with a sensitive conscience that knows it is a sinner and stands in need of the grace of God; it is an intellect that loves truth no matter what the cost; it is a mind that is open, receptive and willing to give up prejudices—there is only ONE KIND OF MIND that will produce fruit and that is the one that absorbs the Word of God, it concentrates on the Word, it practices “patience” (i.e., endurance)—people produce fruit when they abide in and obey God’s word (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:6,7,10,12,14,17). A sinner’s new thought patterns and actions, reoriented in conformity with the word of God, are nothing short of the activity of the Holy Spirit of God at work to produce his fruit in him (Rom. 8:9-11; 2 Cor. 3:17-18; Gal. 5:5; 5:13-24; Phil. 2:12-13; James 1:28-21; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; etc.). SO, THE PURPOSE OF THIS ENTIRE PARABLE IS: (a) to let Jesus’ disciples understand that the success of his program will depend upon the painfully slow process of planting truth in people’s minds and patiently waiting until it grows and bears fruit; (b) to let his disciples understand the difficulties in proclaiming his Word; they will face four kinds of response; they must sow widely, confident that some seed will fall on good ground and produce abundantly; (c) to let his disciples search their own hearts and determine what kind of “soil” (hearers) they are; (d) to let all understand that whether a person is convinced by the truth or not, depends not so much on the weight of the evidences but upon the hearer’s mind-set, philosophy, view-point, desires, prejudices and traditions.

The problem of producing “fruit” (or a “harvest”) in the Lord’s “field” (the world of unbelief) as it APPLIES TO EACH CHRISTIAN’S LIFE TODAY IS—PATIENCE! “Sowers” (i.e., Christians) are responsible only to be faithful in sowing; THE POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR PRODUCING FRUIT IS IN THE SEED AND THE SOIL. This question in our lesson—is answered by a parable only Mark 4:26-29 records—deals with this very principle! The farmer, in the parable, sows the seed and then leaves it, goes to sleep, confident that he has done all he can do, confident in the vitality of the soil and seed itself. He rises by day, waits, as he does other chores, for the natural development of the seed. He does not know how it grows—the growing of the seed is NONE OF HIS IMMEDIATE CONCERN. The seed sprouts and grows automatically (the Greek word Mark uses is actually, *automate*), a Greek adjective meaning “something that happens without visible cause by itself, i.e., spontaneously.” It is used only one other time in the NT and that is Acts 12:10 when the gate of the prison holding Peter opened automatically (“of its own accord”) and Peter went out. The seed matures according to its own schedule of development—BY ITSELF—without any manipulation by the farmer. First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. CHRISTIANS! LEARN THESE LESSONS: (a) all artificial attempts at manipulation of spiritual life and growth must give way to humility and patience and gratitude by the “sower” and left to the power of the seed and the responsibility of the soil; (b) organization and human effort may help sustain life but can never produce it—the SEED PRODUCES LIFE! LIFE GROWS AND MATURES OF ITSELF; (c) he who proclaims the gospel must not expect immediate life or growth because time is absolutely necessary; (d) he who proclaims must have confidence in the word—it is capable of itself without updating or manipulation to make it more “effective”; (e) God’s procedure for establishing and developing his kingdom is in proper growth by stages (2 Cor. 3:18)—“changed into his likeness from one

degree of glory to another...”

Let ‘em exist—try to change them into “wheat”—God will take care of all the “tares” at the judgment. Jesus and his disciples sow only good seed—they are not responsible for the BAD (tares) seed. The field is the world and it is a field of (a) no boundaries; (b) no dense growth; (c) suited for sowing; (d) inevitably awaiting harvest; (e) where perils exist; (f) where deception may occur—both good and bad will exist together; (g) but the whole field belongs to God—he is aware of the enemy—the harvest will be all God’s doing, not the enemy’s. The “good seed” are the sons of the kingdom—but Satan sows “bad” seed in God’s field, even among the good seed. Satan’s sowing is not discovered until both his “tares” and the “good wheat” begin to produce fruit. God does not permit his servants to “root up” (destroy) the bad seed because only at judgment will all fruit be fully matured. Darnel (tares) and wheat are so much alike it is nearly impossible to tell them apart. IT IS OFTEN IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL REAL CHRISTIANS APART FROM THE UNBELIEVERS WHOM THE WORLD CLASSIFIES AS “GOOD PEOPLE.” The difference, of course, is faith in the substitutionary, vicarious, justifying death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The concept of justification by grace through faith and obedience to Jesus’ commandments is so unbelievable God had to prove it by supernatural acts before any person would accept it. Most of mankind arrogantly strives to work out its own salvation by human works! Tares are sown by Satan—make no mistake about that! Most people not of the kingdom would not claim Satan as their “sower” (lord), but he is (Jn. 8:44; Eph. 2:2ff). That is why unbelievers must play the game of hypocrite—because while looking like wheat, they are tares because of their fundamental commitment to self-righteousness. SATAN IS THE ENEMY—NOT THE TARES (2 Tim. 2:24-26; 2 Cor. 10:3-6; Eph. 6:10-19). Tares can be turned into wheat by the supernatural power of the word of God! If the field is God’s and he wants only good seed, why does he allow tares to be sown and exist? This was essentially John the Baptist’s problem and ours! God’s servants are constantly tempted to abandon the slow, humble, peaceful ministry of the word to which Jesus calls, and set themselves to militant “anti” this and that, trying to root up the tares by violent means. But trying to root up “tares” often destroys “wheat.” The apostles learned that “anti-Roman” and “anti-Jewish” was not what Jesus wanted. Uprooting unwanted weeds would ruin many good stalks yet unready for harvest. The similarity between good and bad plants requires the powers of discrimination which servants do not possess. Servants need to remember they are servants—not the Almighty (Lk. 9:49-50; 9:51-56). “Let them both grow together” DOES NOT, OF COURSE, APPLY TO CHURCH DISCIPLINE WITHIN ITSELF! The field is the WORLD, not the church. No interpretation of this parable is correct if it contradicts the plain NT teaching on church discipline (Matt. 18:15-18; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2:1-11; 2 Thess. 3:6,14; Titus 3:10; 2 Jn. 9-11). Jesus is not talking about the problem of sin within the church itself in this parable. He is dealing with the problem of final retribution for the worldly wicked. The church is to “deliver to the world, i.e., Satan, her recalcitrant members hoping they will repent. But only God has the power and authority to burn tares —meanwhile some tares can become wheat— YOU AND I DID! The harvest is the end of the world (Matt. 13:30; 13:39-42). The presence of evil in the world and hypocrites in the church is no surprise to the Lord. He is still sovereign—servants need not fear—he will take care of this problem. The wonder

is that God can do as much good through his kingdom with all the evil there is in the world! The wonder is that men are free to accept or reject the truth. Faith is real! If evil is allowed to exist, since most of us will never live to see the defeat of it, WE MUST BELIEVE CHRIST! This parable keeps us from doubt because we cannot see all the details of God's scheme of redemption!

The kingdom expands from an infinitely small "seed" (beginning) into a large "tree" (all over the world) and it does it like leaven (yeast)—silently, without fan-fare, steadily, surely until it permeates everywhere. The "tree" was a familiar figure to the Jews of a grand, great, benevolent empire (Ezek. 17:22-24; 31:6,12; Dan. 4:10-27). That the kingdom of God could arrive at such greatness with such an unpretentious beginning—from an itinerant, "hill-billy" rabbi (Jesus of Nazareth) and his motley crew of fishermen, tax-collectors, etc.—was unacceptable to the apocalyptic-minded, erudite, self-righteous Jewish leadership of that day. A statistical review of Jesus' hard, countable, successes would have confirmed Jewish estimates of his failure! But God intended to use only the influence of his word upon free human hearts to bring about his kingdom—IT MUST BEGIN SMALL IF IT BEGINS AT ALL! The kingdom is God's; it is for sure; it starts "mustard-seed" small. God himself came to earth to start it not as royalty in a palace, but as a babe in a barn in Bethlehem. When he called his "knights-of-the-round-table" they were the unknown and the unwanted. When he presented the founding principles of his kingdom they were not in impressive documents but in simple parables any child could understand. There is no pretension nor affected sophistication; no big talk about record sales, spectacular successes; the King (Jesus) disliked the colossal and spoke of a cup of cold water, a widow's mite, a lost boy, a Samaritan who helped. God's kingdom began in a very obscure place, without any reasonable prospect of success, any hope of greatness. Its King did not appear in public until he was 30 years of age, then he taught only 3 ½ years. Men have had to mass huge armies, move mountains of groceries, immobilize nations in order to monopolize thrones and forge empires. God sets his kingdom up with a pocketful of seeds, a speck of love, a pinch of faith, a few publicans, fishermen and ordinary women. The kingdom began among the Jews, chafing under the power of foreign oppressors—as the smallest sect among this people in a despised Roman province. Its leader contradicted the cherished notions of his own people and was rejected by them. He made only a handful of followers among the poor and unschooled. He was shamefully executed by his own people. Yet this grew and grew and permeated the world (Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:6,23; 1 Thess. 1:6-10; Acts 17:6; 18:22) AND IS STILL PERMEATING! Leaven is little (just a pinch) and doesn't make any noise. Elijah couldn't find God in the earthquake or the storm—but in a "still, small, voice." Three measures of meal represent all of humanity (the world); the woman who kneaded represents the "Son of man;" the leaven represents the dynamic transforming word of God. The working of leaven pictures the influence of God's word in all of human life—philosophy, religion, politics, commerce, science and the arts. The influence of God's word in the life of each individual Christian is also represented by the leaven (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 3:17-18; 5:17). God's kingdom work is small to begin with—unnoticed as it works—but it permeates the whole "lump" or measure of meal. God's work of kingdom growth is quiet, unspectacular, slow—but certain, transforming, infectious, and contagious, like leaven. "Not by might, nor

by power, but by my Spirit...” Zech. 4:6. “The kingdom comes not with observation, but is within you...” Lk. 17:20-21; Rom. 14:17).

YOU COULD BE ONE OF JESUS’ SCRIBES! But it takes a hunger that will “sell-out” every other lesser thing in your day, study and more study, and an enthusiasm to teach others! The humblest disciple of Jesus knows more than the world’s greatest scholar—He knows that the kingdom of God is of inestimable value! This is pictured by the parable of the man who, finding a treasure hidden in a field, sold every possession he had to purchase the field in order to get the treasure hidden there; and by the parable of the pearl-merchant who found the greatest pearl ever seen and sold all his “good” pearls in order to buy just the one “pearl of great price.” Our dearest possessions are but garbage in contrast with the supreme preciousness and worth of having the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Phil. 3:1-17; 1 Jn. 1:3; 2:23; 5:11-12). What a shame and tragedy that some will exchange the eternal riches (2 Cor. 4:16-18) of heaven for the transitory “garbage” of this world! Those who understand all this bring joy to the heart of God and his Son, Jesus. Just 5 minutes with Jesus, understanding the kingdom, eclipses 5000 years of anticipation (and all the greatness of Solomon). Those who know his kingdom work know things angels long to know (1 Pet. 1:10-12). WILL CHRISTIANS RISE TO THE CHALLENGE OF SUCH A RESPONSIBILITY? PRIVILEGE BRINGS INEVITABLE RESPONSIBILITY! Jesus asked his disciples, “Do you now begin to understand?” They answered, “Yes.” Jesus said, “I now take you one step further than a ‘disciple....’” The ideal is to be such an avid student of Jesus that one becomes a teacher (i.e., “scribe”). THAT IS WHAT PARABLES ARE FOR....TO MAKE THOSE WHO GRASP THEM TEACHERS OF OTHERS (see Ezra 7:6-10). The “disciple-become-scribe” brings out of his treasure (understanding of the kingdom) both old and new. He is able to understand and teach the rich revelation given by God in the Old Testament (Lk. 24:25-27; 24:32; 24:44-48; 2 Tim. 3:15). And, he is able to understand the New Testament of Christ and his apostles which brings both old and new together and shows the new to be the fulfillment of the old (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; 2 Tim. 3:14-17).

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 14:1 – 15:39

This section is a historical “flashback” (see also Mk. 6:12-29; Lk. 9:7-9). Matthew waited until this point in his account to record these events in order to illustrate that Jesus’ work was absolutely not dependent upon John the Baptist remaining alive! That is crucial to Jesus’ preaching of himself as the Messiah and his authority to fulfill the Old Testament with his work and his teaching. Matthew also shows the political risks of godliness to those who were to be Jesus’ apostles and forewarns of what was going to happen to the Lord himself. This section is a reminder of the never-ceasing conflict between the kingdom of God and the world. It shows the futility of human beings facing the specter of death to those very near and dear. One needs to know something of the character of the Herods to understand this section. Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great and Malthea (a Samaritan woman). Herod the Great (who had 8 wives) was the son of Antipater, an Arab from the Negev, who had so ingratiated himself with the Roman emperor he got himself appointed “king of the Jews.” So Herod-Antipas was half Arab and half Samaritan (self-claimed “Jew” but not by genetics). Antipas was given the tetrarchy of Galilee and Perea to rule when his father died. The rest of Herod the Great’s “empire” was divided among his other three sons. His son Archelaus was given the rule of Judea but “bungled” it so badly, the Roman emperor sent “procurators” (e.g., Pontius Pilate) to rule there in the days of Herod Antipas. Antipas was superstitious, cunning, sensual and weak. Antipas had been educated in the city of Rome as a youngster and liked the life of pagan indulgence and power. His first wife was the daughter of the king of Arabia (Aretas). Antipas lived in constant fear of being deposed from his “throne” as “Tetrarch (i.e., “ruler-of-a-fourth-part”) and was equally as paranoid as his old father, Herod the Great. Herod-Antipas divorced his first wife and married Herodias, daughter of Aristobulus and wife of Herod Philip another brother of Antipas. Since Aristobulus was a brother of Antipas that means Antipas married a woman who was his niece, and since Philip was Antipas’ brother, it means Antipas married a woman who was his sister-in-law. Herodias had married her uncle and her brother-in-law. Herod Antipas and Herodias were both guilty (according to the law of Moses) of incest and adultery! Herod-Philip had been disinherited from succession to the throne of the Jews because Philip’s mother, Mariamne II, tried to have Herod the Great murdered. Herodias was “going-nowhere” in her marriage to Philip. Herodias was an ambitious woman, dreaming of being queen over all of Judea, Galilee, Perea and Samaria. So she gladly left Philip and married Antipas. None of the Herods were ever squeamish about killing their own wives, mothers, brothers, sisters, uncles, brothers-in-law, or anyone else who coveted their thrones!

Finally, Herodias had what she had plotted and schemed for all of her life—power, prestige, and affluence, and John the Baptist’s fearless preaching against her marriage had become a threat to all that! Now that Herodias was finally enjoying part of her dream as “queen” with Antipas as her orchestratable-“king” she was not about to endanger it for such a crusty old fanatic as John the Baptist. Herod Antipas, superstitious as he was, thought Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead because of the power Jesus was displaying. While John the Baptist had done no miracles, his preaching and his life had such a powerful effect, Herod had no difficulty believing so mighty a prophet might be raised from the dead and now working miracles. Mark records that Herod had “feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe” (Mk. 6:20). Matthew states that although he wanted to put John the Baptist to death, Herod “feared the people because they held him to be a prophet” (Matt. 14:5). So it was not easy for Herodias to bring about the death of JB. Herod may have been experiencing some “moral catharsis” from visiting with John the Baptist while he held him in prison. But Herodias knew her husband. He was a man of fleshly indulgence. The flesh was always first for him. So she held him a birthday party. At the party there was drunkenness, boasting, sexual arousal (Salome’s dance—Salome was Herodias’ daughter by Philip), political intrigue and all that goes with such a gathering. Men and women do not think logically or ethically under such influences. Herod, perhaps to seduce Salome (his niece and step-daughter), certainly to put on airs in the presence of his courtiers and officers and the leading men of Galilee (Mk. 6:21-23), and swore with an oath to present Salome with anything she wanted—even half of his kingdom! Herod was really “under the influence!” Well trained by her mother, and probably sent to dance before this crowd as seductively as possible, Salome was sent with specific instructions about returning to the mother with the results. Salome’s instructions were to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Herodias had no compunction about involving her daughter in immorality, falsehood, and murder! Herod Antipas was sorrowful and depressed that he had been so seduced as to have to grant such a request, but because of the oaths and boasting flung about before his guests he did not want to go back on his boasts. He wanted to appear to be a “man of his word,” a man with power, and able to grant any request asked of him, so he ordered John the Baptist to be beheaded. **HEROD COULD COMMIT INCEST, ADULTERY, DRUNKENNESS, BOASTING & MURDER, BUT WOULDN’T BREAK AN OATH!** The crime of Herod and Herodias did not silence JB’s voice of truth. They cut off his head but his truth lived on. In fact, their crime precipitated the very crisis to their throne they hoped to avoid. They murdered a popular prophet which aroused Rome’s suspicion of incompetence. A suspicious Roman emperor, Caligula (A.D. 37-41), banished Antipas and Herodias in A.D. 39 (9 years after John the Baptist’s death) into exile where they died so neither of them enjoyed for long the power they so desperately connived to get.

Jesus was going to test the perceptiveness of the faith the twelve and the multitudes were professing about him. Jesus and his disciples needed rest from the recently concluded evangelistic crusade (recorded in Matthew ch. 10). But the hysterically-enthusiastic multitudes wouldn’t allow them to get away. The multitudes wanted to “take

Jesus by force and make him king” (Jn. 6:15). Jesus wanted privacy to think and pray and teach the twelve. So Jesus withdrew and told the disciples “Come away by yourselves and rest a while...” (Mk. 6:31) because they had no time even to eat a meal. The multitudes, however, ran on foot to the place where Jesus and the twelve had chosen to rest—and even got there ahead of Jesus (Mk. 6:33). The multitudes were clamoring for Jesus because they saw the signs which he did on those who were sick (Jn. 6:1-2). After they were miraculously fed, they deserted him because of the demands he made in his great Sermon on The Bread of Life (Jn. 6:66-71). But Jesus had this all planned! The climax and collapse of the great Galilean ministry was not a crisis in which Jesus became the helpless victim of circumstances. “He himself knew what he would do” (Jn. 6:6). When the multitudes gathered by the Sea of Galilee without food and drink, Jesus pressured Philip to begin thinking about the humanly insurmountable problem of the absence of food for some five to ten thousand people. Jesus taught these multitudes all day, deliberately giving them no opportunity to go seek food. The apostles were dumbfounded as to what to do. Jesus threw the problem of no food right into the laps of the worried apostles by saying, “YOU give them something to eat...” (Matt. 14:16). THE DISCIPLES THOUGHT JESUS WAS MAKING AN IRRATIONAL AND ILLOGICAL DEMAND! All the disciples could “scrounge” up was 5 loaves and 2 fish from a young man’s “lunch-bucket.” Everything in Jesus’ plan is to expose the unbelief of the apostles and the multitudes, to expose their forgetfulness of his power, and to encourage any amount of faith any of them might have. He wants any of them who will, to remember they can always trust him to have the power to give whatever they need (but not necessarily what they want). The disciples came to him with arguments of “good sense” but not of faith. They should have been able to remember that not only did Jesus have miraculous power to feed this multitude—he had also given them certain miraculous powers to exercise by faith in him. HOW SOON THEY FORGOT! Jesus was willing to be tested regarding his power because in passing the test, performing the miracle, he would test the crowds and the apostles on what they understood about him from what they would witness. Neither the twelve nor the multitudes passed the test—they both forgot his capabilities and his care. The whole book of Deuteronomy is an exhortation to the Israelites not to forget God’s revealed law and the grace he had shown them in their deliverance from Egypt. The writer of Hebrews exhorts us to not forget exhortations about the Lord’s chastening (Heb. 12:5). Peter admonishes Christians not to be short-sighted and forget their cleansing (2 Pet. 1:9). Christ warned the church at Ephesus, “Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first..” (Rev. 2:5). Those who follow Christ and God, must take their cue from the past. All Christians trust in and hope for is based on what God has revealed once and for all of his grace in his redemptive work, done in history and recorded in the Bible. Christianity is not a religion slowly evolving or developing and molding itself to the “changing” times. Christianity is not something men may manipulate pragmatically to fit circumstances or human whims. Christianity is remembering, not forgetting, who God is, what God has said and commanded, and what God has done. To do otherwise is to disbelieve! UNION WITH CHRIST IS NOT ON THE BASIS OF A MIRACULOUS EXPERIENCE, BUT ON KNOWING, REMEMBERING AND KEEPING HIS WORD. At the conclusion of this event and the great Sermon on the Bread of Life, Jesus said, “The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and life!” (Jn. 6:63).

Peter's "faith" was in his "faith" and not in the Lord—so Jesus let him begin to drown! Jesus withdrew from the huge throng of 10,000 people—even from his twelve apostles. The apostles finally set sail on the Sea of Galilee toward Capernaum. About 3-4 miles out the storm came and wind blew against them so they started rowing. They left shore about sunset and rowed until the "4th watch" (about 3-4 a.m.) but they had gone only 3 miles in 6 or 7 hours of rowing. Suddenly, Jesus came toward them walking upon the sea. Jesus intended to pass them by (a) so they wouldn't all jump out of the boat and drown before he could calm their fears; (b) so they would not think he needed to get into the boat to save himself; (c) to withhold help from them until, in faith, they asked for it. When they saw Jesus walking on water—through the rain and wind and waves—they thought they might be seeing not a real physical body coming toward them but an "apparition" (Greek phantasma, "phantasy, a false appearance, a dream, a reflection, an image"). They may have meant, "It is some one out of the spirit-world" (1 Sam. 28:8-20; Job 4:12-16; Lk. 24:37; Acts 12:15) since Jews did believe in the reality of the spirit-world. They were in a state of emergency, physically exhausted, unnerved by the raging storm, and hampered by darkness...HAD YOU BEEN THERE WOULDN'T YOU BE SCARED, THINKING YOU WERE SEEING PHANTOMS TOO? Peter's "test-question" to see if it was Jesus or some "phantasy" was an expression of faith—but it was a faith that had reservations as we shall see. Peter was always like this—impetuous, skeptical, "open-mouth-insert-foot" and then often reneged on his first bold boast. But do give Peter credit—when the Lord said, "Come," Peter stepped out of the boat and began to walk on the water and actually got to where Jesus was. But then, he looked around at the wind and the waves and his "faith in Jesus" began to waver and he began to sink. Just as soon as Peter gave attention to his circumstances and his own incapacities, his dependence upon the Lord wavered and he began to drown—because the power to walk on the water was not resident in Peter or in Peter's faith, but in the Lord. And the Lord, knowing Peter's immaturity, does not forbid him this experience of nearly drowning! He let's Peter get "to the end of his rope" (much as God did to Abraham, Moses, Job and many other heroes of the faith in the OT). Only Jesus could supply the power of Peter to walk on water and the Lord wanted Peter to KNOW that from this "first-hand" experience—so Jesus allowed Peter to begin to "sink" into the water. TO SOME PEOPLE THAT SOUNDS LIKE JESUS IS SOME KIND OF MALICIOUS, SADO-MASOCHISTIC DEITY SUCH AS THE PAGANS OFTEN PORTRAYED THEIR GODS! But we must LEARN (often, the hard way) that there is no human power that can save us. There is no capacity within us that can overcome the world. SOME PEOPLE HAVE "FAITH" IN THEIR "FAITH." THAT'S WHAT PETER WAS DOING.

SO THE LORD LET HIM "SINK" TO SHOW HIM WHERE HE MUST FOCUS HIS FAITH—ON THE LORD! The Lord is doing that for his disciples every day in every age! He allows us to begin to "sink" in many experiences in our life—to get to the "end of our rope." We must not think we are better than Job or Moses, or Abraham, or David (read some of David's Psalms when he was fleeing from the murderous Saul) or Elijah, or Jeremiah (Jer. 20)—or even the Lord himself (Lk. 12:49-50; Jn. 12:27; Mat. 26:36-46; Heb. 5:7-9). Too often we begin impetuously, like Peter, upon the "sea" of life but then we begin to doubt Christ's power to keep us on top—because we given in to concentrating on human inabilities

and human finitude. We often look at the storms of circumstances, the waves of impossibilities, the winds of doubts and want to RUN AWAY from them. Another time, earlier (Lk. 5:1-11), Jesus tested the apostle's faith in his word at the Sea of Galilee. Notice in that event that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had been fishing and had caught nothing! Christians too often say, "If we could only get off to some new place" when we get discouraged and doubt—we think trying again would be easier. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have a fresh faith without any doubts. "RETREATING" from the everyday tests of faith will not make faith in the Lord easier to come by! EVENTUALLY, IT IS THE SAME OLD "NET" IN THE SAME OLD "PLACE" FOR US! The old temptations and faults and trials and discouragements and doubts are to be conquered where we are in what we are doing. WE MUST LIVE WITH OUR FAITH FOCUSED TOTALLY ON CHRIST WHERE WE ARE IF WE ARE TO WIN AT ALL! Human power is incapable everywhere and in the face of any circumstance. But the power of Christ is adequate and available everywhere for all circumstances!

"Unwashed" in this incident does not mean "dirty" as in soiled---it means "unwashed" as in ceremonially, religiously or ritualistically unclean. Mark's Gospel has a parallel account of this incident, Mark 7:1-23. Mark uses the Greek word *koinais*, "common" and it is translated "defiled" (Mk. 7:5). In other words, the Pharisees had "caught" Jesus' disciples eating food without having cleansed their hands by the ritualistic procedure for cleansing prescribed in the "traditions of the elders." The idea of defilement by eating "unclean" foods and contact with "unclean" persons or objects was actually a part of God's law for Jews in the OT dispensation (Lev. 5:2; 7:19-21; 11:13-15; 17:15; 18:1ff; 19:31; 21:4ff; 22:1-9; Num. 5:3; 6:9; 9:6ff; 19:13-22; Deut. 21:22ff; 14:3:21; 23:10-14; Isa. 4:4; 64:6; 65:5; Lam. 1:8ff; Ezek. 22:15; 24:21ff; 36:25; Ezra 9:11; Prov. 30:12, etc.). BUT NOWHERE IN THE LAW OF MOSES ARE JEWS COMMANDED TO WASH THEIR HANDS BEFORE EATING! Of course, if Jews ate something called "unclean" by the law or touched something called "unclean" by the law, they would necessarily need to make whatever atonement (offering) was necessary to be pronounced "clean" by the priest. However, the scribes and "elders" (Pharisees) had added their tradition that Jews should always "wash" their hands in some kind of "consecrated" ritual before eating just in case they might have touched something or someone which the "elders" had classified as "unclean." (Mark 7:3). They may have gotten their idea about "washing of hands & pots" to be cleansed from Elisha's remedy for the cleansing of the leprous Syrian army captain, Naaman, who immersed himself 7 times in the Jordan River (2 Kgs. 5:14). Remember the six stone jars at the wedding feast of Cana (John 2:6) each of which held 20 or 30 gallons of water "for the Jewish rites of purification"? These were undoubtedly there at the home where the wedding took place in order for the occupants to fulfill the traditions of the elders about "washing hands" and "cups and pots and vessels" (Mark 7:4). These traditions of the elders came from what the Jews called Bath Kol. Bath Kol described the theory called, "The Divine Voice." The Hebrew words literally mean, "Daughter of the Voice." The Divine Voice concept arose in Judaism after the cessation of true prophetism (after the book of Malachi ca. 400 B.C.). God supposedly "whispered" all the rabbinic interpretations of the Law to

Moses and he supposedly passed them on to scribes and rabbis who, in turn, passed them on in oral form only from one generation to another until around A. D. 132-200. Then they were written in the Mishna, Haggadah, Halakah, and the Talmud (the Talmud was written about A.D. 300-400). To substantiate this “concept” of Bath Kol, the rabbis appealed to Ex. 24:12; Deut. 4:14; and Deut. 17:8-13. Thus the rabbis considered their interpretations EQUAL TO THE LAW since they had allegedly been “whispered” to Moses on Mount Sinai. Actually, as Jesus pointed out, they held their interpretations to be an HIGHER authority than the law of Moses! These traditions were, so far as we know now, in oral form only in Jesus’ time. The scribes and Pharisees were extremely serious about their traditions! Scribes (after Ezra’s time) came to think of themselves as so righteous and self-important that only they knew what the Law of Moses said and meant! These “scribes and lawyers” (most of whom formed the sect called Pharisees, i.e., “the righteous ones”) made a deliberate and forcible effort to keep the common people from knowing the Law of Moses (Matt. 23:13; Lk. 11:52; John 7:49). If the people knew just the law of Moses they could keep it without any problems—if the scribes and elders tacked on literally thousands of “interpretations” of the law and made them equal to the law, the people would have to become totally dependent upon the scribes and lawyers to tell them how to be holy! IT WAS A LOT LIKE AMERICAN SOCIETY TODAY—WE HAVE HAD SO MANY “OTHER LAWS,” i.e., EXECUTIVE ORDERS,” AND “INTERPRETATIONS” MADE BY CONGRESS, THE PRESIDENT, AND THE SUPREME COURT TELLING US WHAT OUR CONSTITUTION REALLY SAYS AND MEANS, WE HAVE BECOME ALMOST TOTALLY DEPENDENT UPON POLITICIANS AND LAWYERS FOR OUR EVERY WORD AND ACTION! It’s a “power” thing—just like it was with the Pharisees in Jesus’ day!

Jesus counter-attacked the Pharisees by saying, for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God (Matt. 15:6; Mark 7:8-9). He asked the Pharisees, “Why do you transgress the commandment of God...?” (Matt. 15:3). The legalistic Pharisees alleged they were “protecting” the law of Moses by building their elaborate “hedges” (traditions) around it. But they gave so much attention to their own “hedges” they could not pay attention to the REAL commandments of God—they circumvented the law of Moses in order to keep their traditions.. The Mishnah (Sanh. XI.3) says, “It is more punishable to act against the words of the Scribes than against the Scriptures.” At any point where human traditions attempt to supercede God’s word, traditions must be attacked and resisted. THE ISSUE IS NOT RITUAL, BUT AUTHORITY! Jesus illustrated the way the Pharisees “waltzed around” God’s commandments with their traditions by quoting the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) which say, “Honor (i.e., Greek Tima, “pay wages, support financially) your Father and your Mother” (Ex. 20:12)—even the Hebrew word kaved (“honor”) in Ex. 20:12 connotes “financial support.” But the tradition of the scribes said, “When I designate my finances as, ‘Given to God,’ (or Corban), then I am no longer obligated to financially care for my Father or Mother.” “Corban” was a “vow” and the scribes probably argued that once a person has promised (i.e., “vowed”) to give God something, he is duty bound to do so (Num. 30:2; Lev. 19:12; Deut. 123:21-23; Prov. 20:25; Eccl. 5:2-6; Zech. 8:16ff, etc.). Loosely-stated, half-intentioned promises were inadequate so the scribes “legislated” that a man should make a real vow and say, “Corban”—this would establish a serious vow. To break it would be to take God’s name

in vain. That would be the rationalizations of the scribes! HOWEVER, IF GOD HAS ALREADY COMMANDED IN THE LAW OF MOSES THAT A MAN WAS TO USE HIS POSSESSIONS TO CARE FOR HIS PARENTS, THEN TO DO OTHERWISE IS DEFINITELY A VIOLATION OF THE LAW AND TAKING THE NAME OF THE LORD IN VAIN! God never commanded the “Corban” vow anywhere in the OT! It was a tradition of human origin—intended to circumvent the plain commandment of God!

Human need takes precedence over any rites and ceremonies, especially over the “traditions” of men. God is interested primarily in making men over into the image of his Son, Jesus Christ. There are some ordinances (i.e., commandments) like baptism, and the Lord’s Supper that are necessary to enter into covenant with Christ and are intended to accomplish the new birth and transformation God seeks in human beings. Jesus’ words here must never be distorted to mean that ceremonies like immersion in water (baptism) and the Lord’s Supper may be totally dispensed with as unimportant. Unless we remain sensitive to what God commands in his revealed will (and word) we, too, may buy the rubbish of the rabbis by letting some “Bath Kol” or some home-made, axe-grinding, pony-riding tradition supercede the will of God! There are good and true “traditions” (the Greek word for “tradition” is *paradosis*, or in 2 Pet. 2:21 it is *paradotheises*, and means literally, “handed down”). This Greek word or one of its derivatives is used in the good connotation in 1 Cor. 11:2,23; 15:3; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6 and appears to be used in these places as a synonym for apostolic command and precedent. It is used with the bad connotation in Matt. 15:2,3,6; Mark 7:3,5,8,9,13; Gal. 1:14; Col. 2:8. Even some “traditions” (things “handed down” from one generation to another) formed by godly human ancestors for the benefit of orderliness and wise stewardship in the Christian life may be good. However, when human traditions dare to be elevated above the word of God, they must be resisted. Beware of holding ANY HUMAN INTERPRETATION OR RELIGIOUS PRACTICE ON THE SAME LEVEL OF AUTHORITY AS THE BIBLE! The key to the whole discourse here is: “Teaching as doctrines, the precepts of men.” (Matt. 15:9). To teach the precepts of men as doctrines of God is to put “traditions” up as idols. Men tend to worship their traditions and trust in them rather than in God’s revealed word. That’s idolatry! This problem arises because there are numerous details about the Christian life not revealed in the New Testament. Thousands of questions arise because of this silence. Obviously, since there are numerous details about daily Christian living omitted from the NT, the Holy Spirit did not consider it important for us to try to live the Christian life under the aegis (umbrella) of a multitude of minute details. The NT DOES give us plenty of principles (axioms, precepts, fundamentals, standards, essentials) by which we may make, using our own godly-oriented reason, to decided these details. Whatever we decide to do about matters of silence cannot ever become precepts or doctrines to be bound on others as commands or laws of Christ. But the word of God must root up every tradition which would supplant the authority of the Word—just as Jesus said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up...” (Matt. 15:13). Much of modern Protestant denominationalism, Roman Catholicism and the “Charismatic-movement” supplant the word of God with their “traditions”! The “Charismatic-movement” circumvents plain scriptural doctrine with its subjective (and unproven) extra-Biblical “prophecies” and “revelations” alleged to be directly, and apart-from, the written word of God

in the Bible! All foods, “clean” or “unclean” ceremonially have no bearing on the spirituality of a person. Food per se does not defile. All food is objectively clean because God created it all “good” (1 Tim. 4:1-5; Rom. 14:1ff; 1 Cor. chs. 8-9-10). Even when God arbitrarily declared certain foods “unclean” the defilement was not in the food itself, but in any attitude that would disregard God’s commandment and eat what was forbidden. The profoundest psychological statement ever made in connection with human behavior is: “But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man.” (Matt. 15:18; Mark 7:20). Human beings cannot achieve life with a holy God by strict adherence to human regulations because they have no power to deal with the root cause of carnality—a rebellious heart (see Col. 2:20—3:4). The fundamental issue is: what is getting into a person’s mind, because nothing comes out except what was in there to start with. Instruction, (teaching, propaganda) in all its forms, both good and bad, is a life-changing activity. The issue, therefore, is: WHAT “PRINCIPLES” OR “STANDARDS” DO WE FOLLOW TO BE A CHRISTIAN WHERE GOD IS SILENT? The law of Christ is generally expressed by the word LOVE (Matt. 22:34-40; Rom. 18:8-10; Gal. 5:13): (a) in some detail in clear positive commands, exhortations, examples; (b) in expressed prohibitions, long lists of sins to eliminate; (c) and by principles and rules that govern our Christian freedom to act on questions not specifically dealt with. The principles which guide our Christian liberty are: (a) pragmatic utility—“not all things are helpful...” 1 Cor. 6:12; (b) enslavement—“I will not be enslaved by anything’ 1 Cor. 6:12; (c) honesty in applying these rules—“do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh” Gal. 6:13; 1 Pet. 2:16; 1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; Rom. 3:8; (d) effect on others—“cause no stumbling” Matt. 18:1-14; 1 Cor. 10:31—11:1; (e) the right to dispense with our freedom for the sake of a brother—Rom. 14:13-15; 1 Cor. 9:12,15,18,23; 6:7; (f) edification of others —“not all things edify or build up” Rom. 14:19; 15:2; 1 Cor. 10:23ff; 10:33; 8:1ff; (g) recognize the liberty of others to decide for themselves before God, Rom. 14:5-22; (h) all decisions must reflect the true nature of the kingdom of God which is neither food nor drink, but righteousness, and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit, Rom. 14:17ff; (i) always lean toward mercy, Matt. 5:7; 6:9-12; 9:13; 12:7; 18:15-35; James 2:12ff; 3:17; (j) do everything for the Lord’s glory, Rom. 14:6-9; Col. 3:17-24; Eph. 5:22-25; 6:1-9; 1 Cor. 10:31; (k) accept as a brother in Christ everyone who is genuinely in Christ, regardless of differences of opinion BECAUSE THAT IS THE BASIS ON WHICH CHRIST ACCEPTS YOU, Rom. 14:1; 15:7; (l) remember we live under human authorities too and must obey their ordinances where they do not directly oppose a command of Christ, Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 1:13-21; Heb. 17:17; (m) the last rule is that there may be more rules or principles—we have probably not exhausted all the principles of conduct and attitude toward the silences of God! In all things, love! —not a subjective, human, sentimentality, but a Christ-controlled-love (see 2 Cor. 5:14).

Jesus went into the “district of Tyre and Sidon.” This was not Jewish territory at that time. It was Gentile territory. This is only Jesus’ second physical visit to a “foreign” territory (the other one was as a baby to Egypt). Elijah found great faith in a Gentile woman in this same territory some 800 years earlier (1 Kings 17). When Jesus arrived there, a “Canaanite woman” came and cried out of her distress and helplessness for Jesus to help her baby girl, possessed by a demon, who was not with the woman but had been left at home. This woman’s pagan Canaanite religion had failed her; and her friends couldn’t help her. Her

request was based on some knowledge of Jesus, however meager—someone knew he was in the area and she addressed him as if she knew something about him. At first Jesus didn't even answer her—which might seem rather rude and discourteous until we see what his reason was. Then the disciples “begged” him to send her away because she was pestering them. They forgot that “pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and keep oneself unspotted from the world” James 1:27. Jesus both helped the woman and taught his disciples a great lesson here. When Jesus finally answered her he said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel...” and by so answering he was declaring the fundamental principle of his mission. This woman must acknowledge God's plan and submit to it—Jesus is testing her understanding, not her love for her child. She must acquiesce to the schedule and program of God as he decrees it. Once again she cried, “Lord help me.” But Jesus answered, “It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.” Now this was really rude and discourteous! The “children” (Jews) were first on God's schedule for “feeding” because they are theologically better prepared than the “dogs” (Gentiles). “Dogs” should not try to be humans; they must wait the proper order for “feeding.” The decision about the right order of feeding is decided by the father—not by the subjective, prejudicial feelings of the “dogs” or the “children.” The father decides the proper order of feeding because he has the right and wisdom to do so. Paul develops this same theme in Romans 1:16—first the Jew then the Greek. For 8 chapters in Romans, justification by faith is shown to be unconnected to any merit or national or physical relationship. Then in Romans 9-11 Paul declares God's sovereign order—Jew first, Gentile second. Clearly, the woman had the faith of desperation. She replied to Jesus, “...even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.” She acquiesced to his program! She will take “seconds”—she will take whatever is “left-over”—even the “crumbs.” Note: Jesus cast the demon out of the girl without prayer, commandments, exorcizing rites, or even words—he simply addressed the woman, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed immediately. Not at all like modern so-called faith-healers or priests “exorcizing demons.” Though not present in the flesh, Jesus has the power and the will to solve our great needs if we have the faith of this woman who was willing to take whatever Jesus had to offer! This woman's faith qualified her as a truer “child of Abraham” than many of the Jews! By her faith in Christ she actually became one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel! (see Rom. 9:7-8).

Jesus went from the regions of Tyre and Sidon walking some 30-35 miles to the regions of the Decapolis (a “league of 10 cities on the eastern highlands of the Jordan River—today the nation of “Jordan”). Great crowds were coming to Jesus there. The crowds were probably a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. Going into this territory would give Jesus more time away from the hounding by the Pharisees, and more time with the twelve to impress upon them the purpose of his ministry. The “crowds” were clearly “thrill-seekers”—seeking signs and miracles to change their immediate physical circumstances (read Mark's account, Mark 7:31-37). The crowds came specifically to bring their lame and sick to be healed by Jesus. The crowds had followed Jesus 3 days and they had no food. Jesus had compassion on them and called his disciples to him and repeated a miracle of feeding thousands from a small supply of food (in this case, 7 loaves and a few small fish). The

apostles certainly seem dull-headed here! They asked Jesus, "Where are we to get bread enough in the desert (uninhabited area) to feed so great a crowd?" Why didn't they remember that just about a month earlier Jesus had fed "the 5000" (Matt. 14, Mk. 6, Lk. 9, Jn. 6)?! (a) they were not accustomed to having Jesus use his miraculous powers so unlimitlessly—he did not feed the 12 or himself by miracles; (b) noticing the Gentile nature of the crowds they probably had reservations about giving any food to Gentiles (especially after what Jesus had said to the Canaanite woman); (c) their question may merely be expressing doubt that they can feed the crowd; (d) it is not recorded that Jesus rebuked them here for their lack of faith. The account in Mark 7:31-37 shows that Jesus really wanted this "thrill-seeking" multitude to get its priorities straight. He forbade the multitude to go about telling of his miraculous healing of the man who was deaf and had a speech impediment. He was not there primarily to heal. Healing was only for a purpose much more important—belief in him as the Son of God who would die for their sins. If they would believe that, there would be no need for physical healing...they would have a future life where there would never be sickness or death again. If they would not believe that all the physical healing in the world would not help them. If they would not believe that and sought him only for this world's circumstances, they were making an idol of him just as much as they did the pieces of wood and stone they already had!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 16:1 – 17:27

Jesus continually attempts to withdraw from his adversaries and the crowds and it may have appeared to the 12 as if the Pharisees and Sadducees have him in retreat. Furthermore, Jesus has not yet shown the characteristics expected by the populace which would satisfy their ideas of a Messiah. What will the twelve think of him? This is the fundamental question that must be settled once for all! Jesus recognizes this to be a critical point in his whole mission. He must take the apostles away from the confusion, hostility and pressure of the superficial multitudes and the threatening rulers, for a confrontation. He must have privacy where he may examine, question and teach the twelve in order to crystallize their convictions concerning his identity and his mission in anticipation of the traumatic days ahead (the trials and the cross). The only hope for God's plan of redemption was to convince, confirm and commit these apostles to the knowledge of his deity, and then, to commission them to introduce all hopeless people to him as Savior and Lord. Jesus chooses to take the twelve to the area of the city of Caesarea Philippi (a city typical of the predicament of the world in sin—both then and now) in the northern most reaches of Palestine—north and west of the Sea of Galilee at the headwaters of the Jordan River, in the mountainous region of Gaulanitis which was under the rule of Herod Philip the “tetrarch.” This would get him and the twelve away from all other distractions.

However, on the way to his destination of Caesarea Philippi, he stops off at “Magadan”—a city mid-way north/south on the shore of the eastern “hump” of the Sea of Galilee. There he is confronted by the Pharisees and Sadducees who demand from him “a sign from heaven.” They are adamantly refusing to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ (“Anointed”) of God, even in the face of “many signs of the times” (Matt. 16:3). Most Jews expected the “Messiah” to give a cosmic, catastrophic, undeniably supernatural sign, like fire from heaven (1 Kings 18; Joel 2:30-31). Some expected a great military coup over the Herod dynasty or the Romans as a sign. The Jewish apocryphal writings (i.e., Psalms of Solomon) looked for a zealot of the line of David to deliver them from their foreign oppressors. Some were looking for a priestly Messiah to emerge from the family of Simon Maccabaeus. Jesus did not fit any of these un-Biblical expectations. Jesus rebuked these carnal-minded rulers for seeking a sign! Mark says he was “deeply agitated in his spirit” (Mk. 8:12). They only asked for a sign in order to trap him—not to believe in him. They knew he would refuse—he had refused such travesty before (Jn. 2:18ff; Matt. 12:38; Jn. 6:25-34). They were intending to discredit Jesus before the multitudes when he would produced no “sign.” Jesus deftly answers—“...You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.” Please notice: This phrase, “signs of the times,” is used only once in the NT. There is a similar statement in Lk. 12:54-57 at a different time and place, but NEITHER OF THE INSTANCES are in connection with Christ's second coming—both refer to Christ's first coming! There are to be NO SIGNS of the times preceding his second coming (Matt. 24:36,43,44,50; 25:13). “Signs” of Jesus' Messiahship had been abundantly

given in fulfillment of OT prophecies and the miracles at his birth; signs of his Messiahship were in the preaching of John the Baptist; signs of his Messiahship were abundantly manifested in all the miracles he had done in Galilee, Judea, Perea, even in Samaria. So the coming end of the “Jewish age” should have been seen by that generation from the prophecies in Daniel 9:24-27; Isaiah 66:7ff; Malachi 3:1ff; 4:5ff.. Men who were so adept at reading obscure “signs” of nature about the weather, spent hours going over and over the “signs” and arriving at a conclusion—yet they couldn’t even read the obvious signs supernaturally given and historically evident about Jesus’s Messiahship. Such men would not be convinced regardless of the evidence given! THAT IS WHY JESUS CALLS THEM, “AN EVIL AND ADULTEROUS GENERATION.” They were perverse and faithless. They were not innocently seeking evidence—they were seeking some rationalization by which they could murder Jesus. One great, undeniable, decisive, final, categorical sign would be given—the sign of Jonah (i.e., Jesus being 3 days and nights, dead in the earth, but resurrected on the third day). We are still astonished today at people who seem to be so adept and skillful at reading obscure signs and evidence in biology, physics, meteorology, mathematics, etc., and yet they cannot (or will not) read the signs so historically evident and verifiable in the Biblical record that Jesus is Lord. Paul says such people “refuse to love the truth” (2 Thess. 2:10); Peter says such people “deliberately ignore” the facts (2 Pet. 3:5ff). IT IS NOT THAT THE TRUTH IS OBSCURE—IT IS A MORAL MATTER. PEOPLE SIMPLY CHOOSE TO HATE THE TRUTH AND DELIBERATELY IGNORE IT (Rom. 1:18-32). That is why there is no need for signs of Christ’s second coming. If people will not believe who he is on the basis of the signs he has already given, and repent, and confess him and trust his promise that he will return—they will not do so even if signs should precede his return.

Jesus always (even at age 12) KNEW WHO HE WAS! There was never any doubt in Jesus’ soul that he was God’s “Anointed” (Messiah) and Son of man. Jesus asked the apostles (the twelve) who they had decided he was—Jesus asked them for a decision based on the evidence he had already given them as to his identity. He cuts through emotions and feelings and opinions, and aims at their minds. Their minds must be made up. Only the convinced will commit themselves whole-heartedly to him. Jesus presents his evidence, states his claims, asks his questions, and aims for people’s minds—aims for decisions! What we profess (confess) we possess—“use it or lose it.” Jesus called on the twelve (and all men) to confess him. Now the word “confess” is not in this text, but that is what Peter and the other eleven did, nevertheless. It is worthy of note that Jesus did not ask the apostles, “Who are you?” He did not insist that their salvation was in finding “self-identity” because true personal, human identity comes only when an individual identifies who Christ is! True, self-worth can only come by right relationship to God through his Anointed, Jesus Christ! Whoever does not know Christ, or rejects Christ, can never find real individuality, real worth or real happiness. “Confess” in the Greek text is *homologeō*, which means, “to say the same as...” In other words, to “confess” Christ is to say (in words and deeds) the same about Christ as God says about him in the Bible.

What we have just said about “confessing” Christ is precisely what Jesus meant when he said to Peter, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not

revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.” In other words, Peter was able to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ only because God had revealed him in prophecy and Jesus had revealed himself through God-given miracles. Peter had a good and honest heart that acknowledged these revelations as from God! Peter did not let the human opinions of the Pharisees and Sadducees turn him away from the very evident revelation of God in Jesus. The world by its own wisdom, unaided, cannot know God (1 Cor. 1:21). The world must humble itself and let God reveal himself. MAN HAS TO BE TOLD WHO GOD IS AND WHAT GOD WANTS BY GOD—MAN CANNOT DISCOVER THIS ON HIS OWN! Peter was willing to accept that! That is why Jesus called him, “Blessed....” Refer to our discussion of “revelation” in Matthew 11:25-30). The NT is very emphatic in stressing the significance of confessing Christ (Rom. 10:9-12; 1 Jn. 2:23; 4:15; Matt. 10-:32-33; Mk. 8:38; 2 Tim. 2:12, etc.). C. S. Lewis wrote, “Every time you make a choice, you are turning the central part of you that chooses into something a little different from what it was before—either into a heavenly creature, or a hellish creature....”

Christ built his church not upon Peter, but upon the “rock” which Peter “confessed”—Jesus Christ. The masculine Petros means “isolated rocks, small stones like flints or pebbles for slings” but the feminine petra, is used predominantly in secular and Biblical Greek for “a large and solid rock, cliff, or stony-rock mountain chain.” And Jesus used the feminine, petra when he said, “upon this rock” I will build my church. So what Jesus was saying was this: “And I tell you, you are Petros (a small pebble), and on this petra (rock-mountain) I will build my church.” The metaphor petra to which Jesus referred was WHAT PETER HAD CONFESSED—THAT JESUS WAS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD! Christ is the “rock” upon whom the church is built. He is the “stone without human hands” of Dan. 2:34,44,45. He is the “stone laid in Zion” which the builders rejected, Isaiah 28:16; Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:4-6; Matt. 21:42; Mk. 12:10; Lk. 20:17; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20. Without Christ there would be no church. The church is built upon WHO HE IS, AND WHAT HE DID! Acknowledgment of his deity and Lordship over all life and living is what constitutes the church. Anyone who does not confess Christ in this way is not in the church no matter how often he meets in a “church building” or how many rituals he may perform. The rock is: the revelation from God that Jesus is deity, believed and confessed by people to other people. Upon this alone will the true church of Christ be built.

The subject of the context is the identity of Christ—not Peter! If Jesus meant Peter the individual, why did he make the same promises to all the apostles twice later in Matt. 18:18 and John 20:22-23? If Peter as a “pope” is meant, why didn’t Jesus simply say, “upon thee” I will build my church? The Greek verbs dedemenon, (“bound”) and lelumenon (“loosed”) in Matt. 16:19 are perfect tense participles, meaning an action having been accomplished in the past with a continuing result. Literally, we might translate Jesus’ promise to the apostles, “What you bind on earth will have already been bound in heaven, and what you loose on earth will have already been loosed in heaven” (it is so translated in the NASV). Peter was simply commissioned as an instrument of the Lord to announce what had already been done in heaven—and no more than any of the other apostles. Neither Peter nor any of the other apostles were ever given authority to “bind and loose” (“grant

ablution of sins”) on their own authority. Eleven other apostles opened the door to the kingdom at Pentecost with Peter and thus had the “keys” to the kingdom also! James, Peter, and John were co-equal “pillars” of the church (Gal. 2:9)—Peter was no “pope.” Even when he declared Jesus was God’s “Messiah” in Mt. 16:16 he had not come to full faith in Jesus as God-incarnate. No Jew would have ever professed that until after Jesus’ resurrection (see Lk. 23:13-27). Paul rebuked Peter to his face (Gal. 2:11). James gave his judgment for the church in Acts 15:19. John alone speaks with apostolic authority in Revelation. Paul was the authority as an apostle to the Gentiles after Acts 12. Peter exercised no supreme authority over the rest of the Twelve (Acts 8:14; 11:2; 15:13-21). The Corinthian church did not consider Peter superior to Paul, or even Apollos (1 Cor. 1:10-17). The writings of the earliest church “fathers” indicate: (a) no valid support for the idea of the headship of the bishop of Rome (let alone Peter); (b) Ireneaus mentions the elders at Rome but does not even reckon Peter as having been one of them—but he does name Linus as the first bishop and lists the others by name until his own day (about A.D. 190); (c) Cyprian of Carthage (A.D. 250-257) first presents the idea that Matt. 16:18 applies to Peter as the first bishop of Rome and the Roman bishops at Peter’s successors. **BUT IT WASN’T JESUS WHO GAVE PETER PRECEDENCE!** According to Roman Catholicism, by Loraine Boettner, The Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., Philadelphia, 1962, p. 127—when the triple crown is placed on the head of a new Roman Catholic pope at his “coronation” ceremony the ritual prescribes the following declaration by the officiating cardinal: “Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns, and know that thou art the Father of Princes and Kings, Ruler of the World., the Vicar of our Saviour Jesus Christ.” (National Catholic Almanac). Boettner also writes that The New York Roman Catholic Catechism says: “The pope takes the place of Jesus Christ on earth...By divine right the pope has supreme and full power in faith and morals over each and every pastor and his flock. He is the true Vicar of Christ, the head of the entire church, the father and teacher of all Christians. He is the infallible ruler, the founder of dogmas, the author of and the judge of councils; the universal ruler of truth, the arbiter of the world, the supreme judge of heaven and earth, the judge of all, being judged by no one, God himself on earth.” Try as you will, you will never get that kind of human autocracy out of the NT concerning the polity of the first century church. Furthermore—“For a period of six centuries after the time of Christ none of the regional churches attempted to exercise authority over any of the other regional churches. The early ecumenical councils were composed of delegates from the various churches who met as equals. There is not a scholar anywhere who pretends to show any decree, canon, or resolution by any of the ecumenical councils which attempts to give pre-eminence to any one church. The first six hundred years of the Christian era know nothing of any spiritual supremacy on the part of the bishops of Rome. The papacy really began in the year 590, with Gregory I, as Gregory the Great, who consolidated the power of the bishopric in Rome and started that church on a new course.”—Boettner, op.cit. p. 126.

To “lose one’s life for Christ’s sake” is to deny self. That does not mean we are only to “deny” ourselves tobacco, candy, liquor, cholesterol-laden-food, etc. To deny self is to do precisely what Paul said in 2 Cor. 5:14-21. We must let the “love of Christ control us” so that we “no longer regard anyone or anything from a human point of view.” We must regard, see, view, think, feel, reason, believe EVERYTHING FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF

JESUS CHRIST! Christians are “not their own” they have been “bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Because “one (i.e., Christ) has died for all; therefore all have died....that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Christians “have been crucified with Christ...it is no longer they that live, but Christ who lives in them...” (Gal. 2:20). The person who lives only to fulfill his own selfish will, who contributes nothing to bettering his world, and who ignores the plan of God for his life is blatantly detrimental to himself, to those about him, and to the cause of all good. The Swiss physicist, Johann G. Aimmerman wrote: “There appears to exist a greater desire to live long than to live well! Measure by man’s desires, he cannot live long enough; measure by his good deeds, and he has not lived long enough; measure by his evil deeds, and he has lived too long.” Most of what we know of the life of Jesus Christ is compacted into 3 ½ years, showing that it is not how long but how, we live that ought to vitally concern us. Self-denial is not denial of this or that luxury, but denial of self-will, self-interest, self-sufficiency. Life does not consist so much in what we live on, as in the proper understanding what we live for. Self-denial is stepping down from the throne of one’s own heart and submitting control and rule of one’s total life (thoughts, ambitions, actions) to the direction of Christ through his Word. It is to do to self what Peter did to Jesus in Matt. 16:22 and later in Matt. 26:72-74—to “disown, disavow, deny.” Self-denial is the yielding of our right to choose anything but the revealed will of Christ for every iota of our lives! HOW DOES ONE ACCOMPLISH SELF-DENIAL? Faith in Jesus Christ is the one fundamental imperative! Without faith there can be no crucifixion of self (Gal. 2:20-21). By faith and by free choice we accept his death for ours and his life for ours. In so doing we willingly give up all right to think as we please, feel as we please, and act as we please. A person may choose not to deny self and he may gain the whole world—but what has he gained? Some thing that is to be finally and totally destroyed! What has he lost? LIFE! He forfeits eternal life for eternal destruction! Three of the most baffling questions with which man is faced are: Does God exist? What is God like? What is man, why is he, and where is he going? Jesus does not encourage us to ask these questions at all! JESUS ENCOURAGES US TO MAKE UP OUR MINDS ABOUT HIM —“WHOM DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?” Answer that and you have all your other answers. Professing the identity of Jesus Christ so that men will confess him, is the focus of all true preaching!

The Greek word used by Matthew and Mark to describe the transfiguration of Jesus is metemorphothe (Matt. 17:2; Mk. 9:2). We get the English word metamorphosis from this Greek word. It means literally, “in a different form.” Luke (9:29) uses the phrase prosopou autou heteron, literally, “his persona was other.” The transfiguration of Jesus Christ was an absolutely UNIQUE event. Peter uses the Greek words, megaleiotetos, (“magnificence” or “majesty”) and timen kai doxan, (“honor and glory”), to describe what he and James and John witnessed there on the Mount of Transfiguration. The different, magnificent, glorious and honorific, FORM which Jesus took there indicates clearly that when people saw Jesus at other times, they saw in him nothing different physically from a normal Galilean man like Peter, James or John. Except for this one instance, Jesus had no halo encircling his head—no divine glow about him—he took the form (Gr. morphen, Phil. 2:7) of a human being. But, for one brief moment, Jesus was changed into the form he had with the Father before he

took the form of humanness—HE BECAME DEITY, BRIEFLY, IN ALL ITS MAJESTY, GLORY AND HONOR! Two recognizable men who had been dead for over 1000 years were seen by Peter, James & John, talking with Jesus—the two 1000-year-old men were Moses and Elijah! They were talking with Jesus about his exodus, “exodus” or “departure”(through his death, resurrection and ascension) from this world back to heaven. It is significant that whereas the apostles refused to even consider the predictions Jesus made of his crucifixion and resurrection as an idea contradictory to what they thought was God’s will for the Messiah, here Moses and Elijah (Law and Prophets) discuss it as perfectly in harmony with all the OT taught about the will of God for the Messiah! Peter later admits, “The prophets prophesied...predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory” (1 Pet. 1:10-12), and said all would do well to follow prophecy in this matter as a lamp shining in a dark place (2 Pet. 1:16-19). WOULDNT YOU HAVE LIKED TO HAVE BEEN THERE? IT WOULD PROBABLY HAVE “SCARED YOUR SOCKS OFF!”

Yes! It is clear that his disciples needed further evidence of his true glory. Although Peter (and the others) had made the “good confession” they did not accept the Messiah’s mission to suffer, although he assured them in his warning about crucifixion of his ultimate resurrection and glorification. The transfiguration would give the apostles a glimpse of a majesty they had never dreamed, a glory that would make all earthly grandeur and magnificence fade away into insignificance. It would confirm the program of Jesus in a moment when, according to every human prediction, he was headed for failure. The understanding of discipleship and future mission of the twelve depended upon their concept of Jesus’ Lordship. So the transfiguration of Jesus is: (a) proof that death will not prevail against the establishment of his kingdom; (b) proof that he must die (exodus) to establish it; (c) proof of his deity; (d) proof that the OT was focused on him and his mission; (e) proof that metamorphosis (transformation, transfiguration) is the goal of his kingdom. The transfiguration means Jesus: (a) is the only spokesman for God who is to be heard; (b) fulfilled the entire, complete, final redemptive plan of God for all mankind; (c) is victorious over the failings of humanness through his own perfect righteousness as a human. Christ has overcome, in the Perfect Human being, what was humanly impossible and made it available to all humans who will accept it as a gift of God’s grace through covenant relationship with Christ (Phi. 2:7ff; Acts 4:12; Rom. 8:3; Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Cor. 5:14-21). Most significant, Peter, one of the 3 eyewitnesses, closely connects our partaking of the divine nature” to his recollection of the transfiguration (2 Pet. 1:3-21). In fact, Peter’s first chapter of his 2nd letter follows the outline of the events of Matt. 17; Mk. 9; and Lk. 9—(a) the divine nature made available in Jesus; (b) our appropriation by faith and obedience. By beholding Christ’s glory (i.e., knowing and heeding him from the Scriptures), we are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor. 3:18). The voice of God from heaven was to put the stamp of Heaven’s approval on Jesus’ predictions of how this “metamorphosis” was to be accomplished----through death, through the cross, for both Christ and all his disciples for all ages by their faith and obedience to his vicarious offering on their behalf.

Matthew’s brief account of this healing of the man’s son omits the following: (a) the

greatness of the crowd (Mk. 9:14); (b) the debate raging (Mk. 9:14-16); (c) the amazement of the crowd when Jesus appeared suddenly (Mk. 9:15); (d) Jesus' scolding of the apostles (Mk. 9:16); (e) that the epileptic demoniac was just a baby (Gr. paidiou, "infant, babe, young child"); (f) the epileptic symptoms such as seizures, foaming, rigidity, convulsions (Mk. 9:1; Lk. 9:38); (g) almost fails to mention the demon possession; (h) the long conversation between Jesus and the father (Mk. 9:20-24); (i) that Jesus was moved to rebuke the unclean spirit (Mk. 9:25); (j) the final convulsions and Jesus' raising the boy up (Mk. 9:26); (k) Jesus' returning the boy to his father, healed (Lk. 9:24); and (l) the astonishment of the witnesses at the majesty of God (Lk. 9:43). The father had brought his baby boy to the 9 disciples remaining at the foot of the mountain to be healed. They could not cast the demon out. They tried. Jesus had not told them merely to try—he had told them to "do it" by putting all their confidence in HIS AUTHORITY which he had given them (Matt. 10:1,8). So, the trouble was they had lost confidence in his authority to do this miracle through them. Their "lack of confidence" was evident from their running debate with Jesus' views of his Messianic kingdom and his mission. They just didn't believe he knew what he was saying. Jesus rebukes his own apostles: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you?" YES! HE SAID THAT TO THE TWELVE! Their failure was from their own unbelief! Jesus could provide the power—but the apostles had to produce the faith. The father of the baby boy said, first, "If you can do anything, have pity on us and help us." (Mk. 9:22). So his faith was rather weak! It was more desperation than faith. Jesus' disciples had failed; the man was not exactly persuaded that Jesus would not also fail. He too, was one of the "faithless generation." Jesus' reply, "If you can!" "All things are possible to him who believes." Jesus is saying, "The power is sufficient on my part; is it on yours?—I can give, but can you receive?" The father cried out immediately, "I believe; help my unbelief!" This is a beautiful expression of repentance. The man is wringing out of his soul the most beautiful and profound confession of trusting dependence on Christ's mercy and deity ever spoken! What humility! What genuine confidence in Jesus! What insight to call his "little faith" unbelief! His attitude is in great contrast to that of the Pharisees who arrogantly resisted Jesus! Recognizing the inadequacy of one's faith coupled with an intense longing to be helped with it, is the very kind of faith Jesus is anxious to honor and help (Lk. 18:9-14). THIS MAN IS JUST WHERE JESUS WANTS EVERY MAN—"I BELIEVE....HELP MY UNBELIEF!"

The apostles with their "little faith" failed because their "faith" was focused on themselves instead of Jesus! They did NOT fail from lack of skill or polish or wrong methodology; they didn't fail from lack of readiness or enthusiasm. They failed simply because they had no confidence in Jesus' power! They began to mistrust him when they thought he was mistaken about God's will for his destiny and for them. They would not surrender themselves with full commitment to his leadership come what may. They failed, like Peter failed to walk on the water, because they were not totally committed to Jesus! That is why God had said on top of the mountain, at Jesus' transfiguration, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, HEAR (in Hebrew it would have been shema "obey") YE HIM! Human beings must believe in Christ and obey him even when everything, every circumstance and every person is saying that God's promises are "impossible." WHAT

GOD PROMISES HE WILL FULFILL! HE IS ABSOLUTELY FAITHFUL! We must trust the revealed will of God through Christ when it goes against all our opinions and wishes and feelings. This is what the apostles could not, at that moment, do. We must, in humility, admit that our faith is so weak it might as well be called unbelief, and cry out to Jesus, "Help my unbelief!" We think of the Christian life as a "changed" life, while what God really offers us is an "exchanged life." "Christ within," or "regeneration," means that the life of Jesus is planted in us by the Spirit through His Word and that new life grows and becomes manifest progressively in us, until the very likeness of Christ begins to be reproduced in our lives (Gal. 4:19; Rom. 8:28-29; Phil. 2:5ff). Christ has made this "metamorphosis"—this exchanged life—possible through his meritorious work. He died our death and we are permitted to die by acceptance of that in faith. He has sent his Spirit to be born in us and live and grow into his image by our acceptance of his will in faith.

Jesus is not talking about literal mountains—physical things—when he says, "you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move; nothing will be impossible to you" Matt. 17:20-21. Moving literal mountains can be done by dynamite and bulldozers. Jesus is talking about those "impossible spiritual obstacles" that stand in the way of our being "blessed" (see the Sermon on the Mount). Jesus' answer to the failure of the apostles to cast out the demon does not mean we are to justify every unqualified whim of human nature to be granted to us simply because we say we believe! God does not promise to grant miraculously every screwy idea we cook up and attempt "on faith"—Jesus nowhere in the NT obligates himself or God to deliver anything according to our whims or wills. We must ask, and he will answer, according to his will (1 Jn. 3:22; 5:14) We have to have an overcoming faith because in the world we will have tribulation, testing, trial and crosses to bear (Jn. 15:18ff; 16:33). Faith is what makes it possible to remove impossible mental and spiritual obstacles, to bear impossible spiritual burdens, to reject impossible temptations, to "see" that which is impossible to see with the physical eyes (2 Cor. 4:16-18; Heb. 11:27).

The transfiguration and the two following incidents are emphatic lessons on the "metamorphosis" Christ wants in your life and mine. Because in such a transformation, we will share in the glory manifested in the Perfect Human, Jesus, on Mt. Hermon.

Watchman Nee tells this story: Once a Christian was traveling by train and found himself in a car with three non-Christians who were passing the time gambling. They invited the Christian to join them. "I am sorry to disappoint you," he said, "but I cannot join your game for I have not brought my hands with me." "Whatever do you mean?" they asked in blank astonishment. "This pair of hands does not belong to me," he said, and then followed with the explanation of the transfer of ownership to Christ that had taken place in his life.

That, my friend, IS METAMORPHOSIS! It is the result of Christ's atoning work in perfecting humanness being transferred into us by hearing only Jesus, believing Jesus means what he says, humbly obeying our Lord when it means giving up our rights.

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 18:1 – 19:30

Matthew says, “At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’” That sounds innocuous enough in itself. But we’re talking about heavenly, spiritual matters here. And Luke says the disciples were arguing as to which of them was the greatest (Lk. 9:46 uses the Greek word *dialogismos*, literally, “dialoging, reasoning-through, debating”). It doesn’t seem to be an angry confrontation, but a very serious “dialog” between them as to which one of them would be the greatest in the kingdom. They expected this “Messiah” to assert himself and break the power of Rome and set up the Jewish kingdom glamorized in the rabbinical traditions. Instead, he kept insisting he was going to suffer humiliation and death. So, the apostles kept thinking: “If that is what is to happen, what is your (Jesus’) idea of greatness in the kingdom?” **JESUS PROCEEDS TO TELL THEM!** “Verily, I say to you, Unless you turn and become like children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” The apostles had the fleshly concepts of greatness—position, human applause, power, wealth, erudition—humiliation did not fit their standard of greatness. Greatness, measured by God, is just the opposite—humility and service for others is greatness with God. Jesus said, “Whoever humbles himself like this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew used the Greek *tapeinosei heauton*, which means, “lowers himself.” The Biblical word translated “humility” is *tapeinophrosune*, from *tapeinos*, “lowly,” and *phronema*, “mind.” “Humility” is “lowliness of mind.” Humility is defined by the apostle Paul, “Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves” (Phil. 2:3) and illustrated by Christ’s “emptying” and “humbling” himself to become a servant of humanity and die on the cross. Child-likeness is: (a) being conscious of imperfection and waiting for correction and instruction in order to “grow up” (i.e., teachableness); (b) submissiveness and malleability—impressionable and moldable; (c) simplicity and being uncomplicated, unsophisticated, without guile—no false facades or veneers; (d) great desire to please others by acts of devotion and loyalty; (e) totally dependency. Read these scriptures on childlikeness (Psa. 131:2; Mk. 10:15; Lk. 18:16; 1 Cor. 14:20; 1 Pet. 2:2); these on simplicity (Psa. 116:6; 119:130; 131:1; Matt. 11:25; Lk. 18:17; Rom. 16:19; 2 Cor. 1:12; 11:3); these on humility (Prov. 16:19; 22:4; 29:23; Isa. 57:15; Micah 6:8; Lk. 14:10; 22:26; Rom. 12:3; as. 4:10; 2 Pet. 5:5). Christians are to be “clothed with humility.” How do little children (at first) receive other little children? Lovingly, openly, enthusiastically, non-exploitive, like a brother or sister. Jesus told these twelve adult disciples that they could test their own spirituality and fitness for the kingdom by their relation to a “child.” To regard a “child” (a “little one”) with scorn or indifference means one is not fit for God’s kingdom! Jesus didn’t mean “child” in only a literal sense because all believing adults are “children” of God, (Eph. 5:1-2). The heart that is so wrapped up in its own superiority that it is contemptuous of a “little one” belonging to Christ is one that does not care whether someone else is tempted and stumbles or not.

As long as there are impenitent, unregenerate people in the world, temptations are

sure to come. And the world will be “fallen” (inhabited by impenitent, unregenerate people) until Jesus comes and this “world” ends. Temptation in the Satanic sense will continue until Satan and all his cohorts are incarcerated in the eternal prison we call “Hell.” In the book of Revelation it is called, “The Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone.” Although “bound” to a much more limited sphere of influence than he was before Christ through the Gospel and the Church began to “plunder” his “house” (see Matt. 12) still the devil, Satan, that old Deceiver, “roars about like a lion seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Our Adversary, though chained and limited by the final, complete covenant truth of God, is still on the prowl. And he will try every seduction God permits him to have to ensnare every unarmed person he can. The “child-like” Christian will do nothing to tempt anyone else to sin. A person would be better off dying the horrible death of drowning in the sea with a great millstone around his neck than tempting one of God’s “little ones.” A “child-like” Christian will not despise any “little one” who belongs to God. Christians avoid tempting others at all costs—even if it costs them their eye or hand or foot, or time, or money, or humiliation, or their own pleasure or indulgence or liberty. The “child-like” Christian will minister to God’s “little ones.” All of heaven ministers in humble service for these “little ones.” Angels are “ministering spirits” sent forth to serve God’s “little ones” (Heb. 1:14). God’s “children” do have “guardian angels” (Dan. 10; Rev., etc.). Jesus came from heaven to die for God’s “children.” What a contrast between heaven’s desire to minister to “little ones” and that of rebellious, sinful people whose desire is to exploit “little ones” for selfish ends. People must have the “spirit” of heaven if they are to become members of heaven’s kingdom—that “spirit” is ministry, servant-hood, discipleship. The spirit of heaven is the heart of a shepherd. God is not only willing to receive straying sheep—HE GOES OUT AFTER THEM LIKE A SHEPHERD. See Luke ch. 15 to find how God goes after the lost! THIS “SPIRIT” IS THE KEY TO ALL THE CONTEXT OF MATTHEW CH. 18—EVERY THING SAID IN THIS DISCOURSE REVOLVES AROUND MATTHEW 18:14—“So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

Remember, Jesus is not talking about “children” in just the sense of years or physique—he is talking about even those adults who are “little ones” in the sense of childlikeness (humility, innocence, naivete, spiritual-immaturity, etc.). Pride is the sin that causes people to “despise” all “little-ones” whether they are young in age or elderly. Pride is not to be present among those who are citizens of the kingdom of God. Jesus told his disciples, “It shall not be so among you...” Matt. 20:25-26. Pride gets no pleasure out of having something—only out of having more of it than others in order to appear to be “better” than others. It is comparison that feeds pride. The pleasure of being ‘more’ educated, famous, sophisticated, good-looking, successful, powerful, rich, etc., etc. is what feeds the urge to “despise others.” Once the element of comparison or competition is conquered, pride is gone! Once a person puts himself/herself up against Jesus, the One who is in every way immeasurably greater than we are or ever shall be, pride is gone! Only by constantly and consistently comparing ourselves with Christ can we truly stop despising others. Only in this way can we become humble like a little child. Only in this way can we avoid being indifferent to other “little ones.” Unless we know God, we cannot know ourselves at all! Let us preach that people know, not our experiences, but God and Jesus. It was God’s purpose in the

Incarnation of Jesus Christ to give us an empirical, historical view of God in the flesh so we could compare ourselves with God and be humbled—and quit despising others. Evangelism, concern for others, heavenly concern, is motivated essentially by comparing ourselves with Jesus! Unless we see how lost we are and how we are saved only by the grace of God, we will not stop making false comparisons, we will not have a heavenly concern.

The “great” person in God’s kingdom will go and reclaim a sinning brother—especially if the sinning brother has specifically sinned against him (Matt. 18:15-20). But every offence (private or public) is one in which the whole body of Christ is concerned (for when one member suffers, all suffer 1 Cor. 12:26). When any member is lost to the body, every member of the body suffers some loss. A sin against the conscience-standards of one member of the body is a sin against the whole body. On the other hand, a sin against the body is a sin against the individual member of the body because every individual member is jealous for the honor of the whole body. **WHAT HURTS THE GLORY OF THE WHOLE BODY HURTS THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBER!** Chronic and continuing alienation between two people in the body of Christ is a **SCANDAL** that cannot be tolerated because it is fraught with deadly harm to the spiritual life of all. The “great” person in the kingdom will reclaim a straying brother or sister in the humble spirit and procedure which Christ sets forth in his will here in Matt. 18. First, Privately; second, with third parties brought in as witnesses and evidence of the concern of the whole body; third, the whole church, as further evidence of the care and love of the whole body. This procedure is wise because (a) it makes the confession for the offender easier at the first because he is not immediately exposed to criticism of the public; (b) it demands the highest motives from the offended ones; (c) it leaves no room for gossipers and slanderers; (d) it restrains resentment on the part of both offender and offended; (e) it keeps down inquisitions of officious-minded “committees.” “We cannot really grasp the teaching of this chapter and ever again see the church as if it were a hotel where all kinds of people meet, for a short space, sit down together at the same table, and then depart neither knowing or caring anything about one another” (Fowler, op.cit. Vol. III). The law of love is the basis of greatness in interpersonal relationships between God’s children. It is because a Christian is bound to take every human being to his arms as a child of God that he is not only entitled, but bound, to be earnestly concerned about his behavior—and this is especially true of brothers in Christ. The “great” man in the kingdom sees his responsibility toward a sinning brother as not created by the fact that he has wronged the one offended, but by the fact that he has sinned and harmed himself! In other words, the “great man” of the kingdom goes after a sinning brother to reclaim him, in order that he may gain his brother! The Greek word for “gained” (Matt. 18:15) is *ekerdesas*, and is a word from the ancient market-place used to characterize the process of accumulating wealth! Thus, the “great” person of the kingdom realizes that when he has brought a child of God to reconciliation, such a brother is a part of the “great person’s” treasure!

Forgiveness, reconciliation, reclamation is the business of each member of the body of Christ—not just the elders or preacher. The least members should do is pray for reclamation of those who sin and fall away! The least members of the body can do is support the shepherds (elders) of the flock in their humble tasks of discipling the body and

leading it in the holiness which Christ desires for it through his word. Christians are called upon to SPEND THEIR WHOLE LIFE-TIME FORGIVING! That's what Jesus means by 70 X 7 (or 490, it is interesting that "490" is the time predicted by Daniel which God would take to "forgive" his "indignation" against Israel for its idolatry and send to it the Christ—see our comments on Daniel 9:24-27 in Daniel, 3rd edition, by Paul T. Butler, 1982, College Press, Joplin, MO, pp. 341-352, or our comments in Sunday School lessons on Daniel 9:24-27). If we forgive but the offender does not repent, our willingness to forgive will probably not profit him, but it will certainly profit us, for it will make us sons of our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:43-48). Our forgiveness is not conditioned upon the offender's repentance—the offender's forgiveness is dependent on his repentance. BUT WE MUST FORGIVE LIKE CHRIST FORGAVE US! He died for the sins of the whole world. While the whole world will not accept his forgiveness—it is there nevertheless! IN ORDER TO FORGIVE SOMEONE ELSE, WE MUST BE WILLING TO BEAR THE OFFENSE AGAINST US. We do not expect the hurt and humiliation to be transferred by to the offender before we are willing to forgive—Jesus didn't! Forgiveness is not a virtue of the worldly-minded. The pagan philosophy is: "Be kind to friends, take vengeance on enemies." Even in the OT, man's forgiveness of man is seldom mentioned. Some Jews appealed to Deut. 23:6 and Ezra 9:12 to indicate that forgiveness was not necessary for some offenders. FORGIVENESS IS UNIQUELY A CHRISTIAN VIRTUE. FORGIVENESS IS A MUST FOR CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS (Matt. 6:12; Lk. 5:21; Mk. 11:15-25; 2 Cor. 1:7,10; 12:13; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13, etc.). Jesus taught a little parable to illustrate that the "great" person needs to remind himself of how much he has been forgiven. The teaching about forgiveness is an appropriate end to the lesson on greatness in the kingdom because it demands God-like character. It demands humility and self-denial and concern for others. A vindictive temper is one of the vices fostered by an ambitious spirit and a small man. An ambitious man is sure to be offended many times, or to be offensive many times. Forgiving is not the way of an ambitious, proud, and power-seeking person—he is more in his element when he exacts vengeance or payment for all wrongs. There is no room in God's kingdom for that kind of ambition. THERE IS ROOM IN GOD'S KINGDOM ONLY FOR SERVANTS, SLAVES, FOLLOWERS, LEARNERS, AND "CHILD-LIKE" PEOPLE! We are excluded from the kingdom of Christ if we do not forgive! We would not be happy ruled over by a King with this kind of character. GREAT MEN IN THE KINGDOM ARE GREAT FORGIVERS...THE GREATEST OF ALL FORGAVE THE MOST OF ALL! (See Psa. 86:5; Jer. 31:34; Micah 7:19-29; Psa. 103:1-14; Hosea. 14:45; Heb. 10:17). When Jesus taught this lesson again in Luke 17, the apostles were shocked, because these are startling concepts. THIS IS A CHALLENGE TO A LIFE ON THE LEVEL OF HEAVEN ITSELF!!!! The apostles realized it would take great faith to be so forgiving. THE ONLY WAY A HUMAN CAN FORGIVE IS TO BELIEVE JESUS KNOWS WHAT HE IS TALKING WHEN HE SAYS FORGIVENESS IS HEAVEN'S DEMAND, WAY OF LIFE, AND BRINGS GREATNESS! The life of total forgiveness cannot be reasoned out in this life. It doesn't "work" so far as the world sees things! The world demands, and has a Biblical mandate for "an eye for an eye" justice/retribution (Rom. 13:1-7). Unmitigated forgiveness is only an obligation for kingdom-behavior. Jesus told them it was not more faith they needed, but better faith. Faith is not quantitative, but qualitative. Jesus told his disciples they are in a specific sense responsible for their faith and its quality. JESUS NEVER GAVE THEM

FAITH. He did some miracles, and lived a life to prove who he was and that his every word could be trusted. But they had to do the believing. Jesus always left people to wrestle with their problems themselves by applying whatever lived in their minds. If faith in him lived in their minds, any obstacle (even an unforgiving spirit) could be overcome; if unbelief lives there, even the smallest obstacle spelled defeat. **EVEN JESUS HAD TO HAVE FAITH IN THE FATHER TO FORGIVE! JESUS CAME FROM HEAVEN TO PROVE TO ALL WHO WOULD TRUST HIM THAT THIS IS GREATNESS BECAUSE IT IS GODLIKENESS. NOW IF JESUS IS LIKE THIS—THEN THE KINGDOM IS LIKE THIS. IF WE WANT TO BE THERE WE MUST BE LIKE THIS!** Except you turn and become as a little child you will not be there! “Children” are unashamed of acknowledging God and Christ (Matt. 21:14-16); children imitate their Father (Matt. 5:45; Eph. 5:1; Jn. 5:19-20); children obey their parents; Jesus obeyed both his earthly parents and his heavenly Father (Lk. 2:51; Jn. 15:10).

Matthew omits practically six entire months of Jesus’ earthly ministry between chapters 18 & 19—3 months of the “Later Judean Ministry” which is recorded in detail in John’s Gospel, chs. 7-10, and 3 months of the “Later Perea Ministry” all of which is recorded in Luke’s Gospel, chs. 10-19. So Matthew ch. 19 is the climactic close to 6 months of ministry. Marriage was the first institution for human happiness inaugurated by God. “Marriage is an intimate, personal union to which a man and a woman consent, consummated and...nourished by sexual intercourse, and perfected in a life-long partnership of mutual love and commitment. It is also a social institution regulated by the word of God and the laws and customs which a society develops to safeguard its own continuity and welfare.”—Dwight Hervey Small, in Zondervan’s Pictorial Bible Dictionary, article on “Marriage.” Animals mate—humans marry. Marriage is not just an end in itself—it is a means to a number of God-ordained ends. God’s goals in marriage from Matthew 19:1-6 are; (a) to serve God’s divine authority and purpose; God created marriage, it is his to command and control by his expressed will in the Bible. Human will, human feelings, human desires must be subordinated to God’s will in marriage. God made marriage so that man and woman both might complete what is lacking in one another. When a man or woman becomes “married” to Christ (Eph. 5:21-33) they do not lose their individuality—therefore men and women united in marriage **DO NOT LOSE INDIVIDUALITY, THEY COMPLETE, FULFILL, ENHANCE, EMBELLISH AND ACCENT THEIR INDIVIDUALITY.** God made marriage to exemplify the true relationship of man to God and God to man—**MARRIED!** It is no accident that the comparison between human marriage and the church’s relationship to God and Christ are used by the writers of the Bible (Hosea chs. 1-3; Isa. 62:1-5; Ezek. 16:1-63; John 3:29; Eph. 5:21-33; Rev. 19:6-10; 21:2, etc.); (b) to serve for man’s cultivation of the character of oneness and intimacy—intimacy is one of the deepest, most subtle needs of human life. Man needs to develop the ability to be intimate. Men and women need the intimacy of other human beings on earth. Some of that may be attained in the parent-child relationship, but God intends marriage to be where that is best achieved and enjoyed on the human level. True, Biblical love in marriage says, “I love you and want you to be happy whatever it may cost me.” True love is willing to make itself vulnerable to being hurt, spurned, rejected and still forgive and care and strive for the loved-one’s highest good. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder! The Greek text reads literally,

“What then God himself yoked together let not man separate.” It was God himself who put all the necessary components of marriage together. He “yoked” them all together under his own authority. Man has no right to separate any of the components from God’s authority.

God never intended divorce; he is not pleased with it; it is contrary to his will for man’s good. But then, God never intended drunkenness, thievery, war, murder, gossiping, slander, child-beating, gluttony, wastefulness, etc., etc. either! Adultery (sexual unfaithfulness of married persons) is prohibited in God’s will (Ex. 20:14; Matt. 19:18). An impenitent adulterer cannot enter the kingdom—but a penitent adulterer can be forgiven and accepted into the kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Polygamy was apparently not considered as adultery in the OT—it was not God’s ideal for man and woman, but it was permitted “because of the hardness of people’s hearts.” God, in his mercy, gave permission for divorce in the OT “because of the hardness of people’s hearts.” The permission for divorce was not to allow promiscuous living but to protect an innocent woman (women were not free to divorce men) against a man who had cast her off once from being forced to go back to the scoundrel again as his wife (Deut. 24:1-4). Jesus apparently recognized that unfaithfulness by one of the marriage partners dissolves the marriage and thus gives cause for divorce IF forgiveness and reconciliation is impossible. Christ would much prefer every marriage, even though broken by unfaithfulness, be repaired by repentance, love, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Apostolic doctrine apparently declares a marriage dissolved when one who is an unbeliever “separates” from a believer (Greek phrase in 1 Cor. 7:15 *ei de ho apistos chorizetai, chorizestho*). The RSV has a sloppy translation of this, i.e., “But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so...” The word “desires” is not in the Greek text of 1 Cor. 7:15. Literally the phrase would read, “If the unbelieving separates, thus separating they are not bound.” Paul means such a “separation” is a “divorce” because *chorizetai*, is the same word Jesus uses in Matt. 19:6 to mean “put asunder” or “divorce.” A marriage fraught with hatred, bitterness, cruelty and religious persecution is worse than divorce! Jesus no more approves of a marriage continuing under those circumstances than he does of one continuing with impenitent adultery! For a full discussion of marriage—divorce—remarriage read our comments in First Corinthians, Chapter 7, Paul T. Butler, College Press or see our Sunday School lessons, 1 Corinthians, chapter 7.

The “rich” find their security and identity in their “riches.” Being “rich” and seeking more “riches” consumes their lives. “Riches” become their god! Jesus first touches on the rich, young, ruler’s fundamental problem—Who is “good.” Jesus’ first concern with the young man was not that he was rich while others were poor—being rich does not necessarily constitute a sin. The young man’s primary problem was his indiscriminate use of the term, “Good Master.” Jesus rebuked the young man for trying to flatter and manipulate a Galilean rabbi. The young man evidently did not look upon Jesus as God in the flesh, the Messiah, but as an extraordinary, but naive, rabbi—a human rabbi nevertheless. Jesus corrected the young man’s theology before getting to the practical application in his life. Paraphrasing Jesus: “Young man, why are you calling me good? I know you are thinking of me as a man only. The goodness of any man (which you obviously take me to be) is not worthy to be noticed. IT IS GOD ALONE WHO IS ESSENTIALLY AND ABSOLUTELY GOOD!” If God

alone is good, then all men everywhere stand in absolute need of grace. Whatever human beings are or possess, it is theirs only by grace. THAT WAS THE YOUNG MAN'S PROBLEM. What he thought he was by law-keeping he did not consider as from grace but as righteousness he had earned. What he possessed he did not consider as from grace but as belonging to him by having earned it. Until men get straight once and for all that everything they are or possess is from the grace of the only absolutely good God, they will not be able to give full commitment of self or possessions to God. It is the most difficult admission human beings have to make—that they are totally dependent on the grace of God. In their earthly lives, people work and are rewarded commensurate with their skills and productions. They know that their reward has been duly earned. But it is not so with God—because HE IS ABSOLUTE. HIS STANDARDS ARE ABSOLUTE. ANY FAILURE TO KEEP AN ABSOLUTE IS REWARDED WITH ABSOLUTE PUNISHMENT. But then God is merciful and offers a gift, free of all merit, by divine grace. ALL PRIDE HAS TO GO IF HUMAN BEINGS ARE TO RECEIVE GRACE FROM THE ABSOLUTELY GOOD ONE! So long as humans think there is some good in them, they will think they deserve the blessings that may have come their way, and they will not be ready to surrender all of it to God. Second Jesus tries to lead the young man to see that everything in his life must be brought under the direction of the will (law) of God. Jesus said, "Keep the commandments!" The young man replied that he had kept the commandments, but his knowledge of the law was superficial (either unconsciously or deliberately). Jesus reminded him of the 10th commandment when he said, "Go sell all that you have and give it to the poor..." The 10th commandment is "Thou shalt not covet your neighbors house...wife...manservant...or anything that is your neighbor's..." (Ex. 20:17). The rich, young, ruler probably had already decided that he had kept even this commandment. He could probably say, with some degree of sincerity, "I do not want what any of my neighbors have—why should I, I have plenty of my own" (compare Lk. 12:13-21). Disregarding the fact that it is extremely difficult for any man to say I am completely satisfied with what I have, Jesus was getting to the spiritual essence of the 10th commandment. Had Jesus merely said, "Thou shalt not covet..." the young man would have been satisfied with his standing before God's law. But Jesus translated the 10th commandment into a practical test by demanding that the ruler abandon all of his riches—not covet any of it! But the rich young ruler loved his riches more than the real spiritual intent of the law of God. And the law of God was not to take anything away from the young man—it was intended to give him eternal life. He could not have eternal life with God so long as he worshiped his other god—Mammon! At the North American Christian Convention a number of years ago in St. Louis, MO, a preacher asked his audience, "How many want to go to heaven." Hundreds and hundreds of hands were raised. Then he said, "How many want to go tonight?" Hardly a hand could be seen! Too many, even Christians, want to hang on to this world as long as possible and then go to heaven. Does that indicate we haven't really "renounced all" to follow him—right now?! He is not any different where he is now than when he was speaking here on earth 2000 years ago to the rich young ruler!

It will be hard for a "rich man" to enter the kingdom (compare Mk. 10:23-31; Lk. 18:24-30). IN FACT, IT IS MORE THAN HARD—IT IS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE! It is easier for a camel to go through the hole or "eye" of a needle than for a rich man to enter the

kingdom. Jesus is not talking here about some small gate in the wall of the city—he is talking about a sewing needle. Dr. Luke uses these Greek words *trematos* (eye), and *hraphidos* (sewing needle), literally, “eye of a sewing needle,” to describe what Jesus said. The disciples were exceedingly astonished—and so is the rest of mankind. Most of mankind accepts a generalization that if a man is rich, he has been blessed by the Almighty; if he is blessed, he must be relatively righteous. The Jews especially reasoned this way. But it “taint necessarily so!” Why? Because wealth carried with it power and influence. And power is far more likely to create pride and self-sufficiency than it is to produce poverty of spirit and humility, and dependence on God. Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10 & 6:17-19! Who then can be saved? The disciples reasoned—“If freedom from the desire to have riches and to hold on to them is the only route to salvation, who can be saved?” In other words, there is not one human being (hardly) that would not be rich if he or she could. Most of us dream about it or daydream about it at one time or another in our life. **SO IF THE DESIRE TO BE RICH KEEPS US FROM SALVATION, WHO CAN BE SAVED?** The disciples were being honest and recognized that if they could, they would have gladly been as rich as the young man. They recognized Jesus was not dealing with just those rich in fact—but also everyone who would prefer being rich to above almost anything else, which includes most of the world! Admitting that they probably would never be rich following Jesus, and remembering that they had left all to follow him, the apostles said, “**WHAT THEN SHALL WE HAVE?**” Jesus had told the ruler that if he wished to fill the real void in his life and be perfect (i.e., whole, complete, reach the goal of life), he should give up all his possessions and follow him, and he would have treasure in heaven. The future of the follower of Jesus is all in heaven. The believer has no other future. Make no plans for another future if you belong to Jesus. Peter’s question implied a feeling of superiority over the young ruler. Peter was implying, “We have done what you told him, Jesus—we are the first of your disciples. This young ruler has turned his back on you Lord, and if he should come back at the last moment, remember, We were working for you first! So, then, what shall we have? Will we not have a greater reward than others? Jesus answered: Everyone who labors will be rewarded! But many who were laboring first (even apostles?) shall be last, and many who were laboring last shall be first. Rewards will certainly come to all who have renounced self and this world in favor of Jesus—**BUT THE REWARDS WILL NOT BE ACCORDING TO MEN’S STANDARDS.** We must commit the future totally to Jesus and give up any idea of working out the future to fit our own, often carnal, concepts. Jesus goes on to teach some startling things about heavenly rewards—but that is for the next chapter’s lesson.

Heavenly character (“greatness”) is not something man achieves—it is something he allows God to achieve in him through God’s will being lived out in his life. Heavenly character (“greatness”) is to be cultivated now, while man lives in this earthly life, while he is afforded the grace of God to produce it in his life. The time is coming when God’s grace will be no longer offered! Heavenly character (“greatness”) will be rewarded with heavenly opportunities to be like God in loving service to others, and with the privilege of personal relationship, partaking of the divine nature, with Christ.

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 20:1 – 21:46

This parable of the “laborers in the householder’s vineyard” in Matthew ch. 20 apparently carries over from Peter’s question: “What then shall we have.” The parable does not intend to teach that a man may foolishly waste his life and come to work for Jesus at the 11th hour and expect a reward. Nor, does it teach anything about socialism or communism or share-and-share-alike economic systems for nations or individuals in this world. It does teach one simple truth—in the kingdom of God a man’s reward will be, not according to length of service, or notoriety of service, but according to his faithfulness to the opportunity which is given him. It also teaches that everyone who labors in the Lord’s vineyard will be rewarded—**BUT NOT ACCORDING TO THE WORLD’S STANDARDS!** The rewards will be spiritual in nature. The rewards will not be based on outward success or merit. The “householder” (Jesus) will reward according to his own judgment—“Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?” The householder keeps his promise. Each person who chooses to labor for God will be graciously and generously rewarded—if the last are first and the first last, it is none of the laborer’s business, because the whole vineyard belongs to the Creator. If the “first” would look at their labor correctly they would consider it a reward to be given opportunity to be first or longest out in the vineyard (Phil. 3:8-11). The Divine Householder rewards with absolute knowledge of what is just, right, honest because he looks not at outward marks of laboring (which may be less than they should have been in relationship to opportunities), but he sees the motives, the intentions, the desires of the real situation. The rewards will be according to faithfulness toward opportunities. God rewards on the basis of the spirit and attitude in which the discipleship was done **NOT ON VOLUME**. The last group of laborers had not been at work before because no one had hired them—they had no opportunity earlier, but when the householder sent them out, they were faithful and true to their only opportunity. Therefore, their reward was what the householder decided to give them—the same as that given to those who had been faithful to an earlier opportunity. Neither long nor short service is pleasing to the Divine Householder if done for wrong motives. The Parable of the Two Sons (Matt. 21:28-32) illustrates this. Notice, the first laborers bargained but the last went right to work without trying to prove what they deserved! Is Jesus telling Peter he is the one bargaining? Men will be rewarded not for what they do but what they would have done if they had the opportunity. Naturally, people show what they would have done by their attitude and action toward whatever opportunity they **DO HAVE**. “He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest in much” (Lk. 16:10-12). God does not reward according to human standards. He looks on the heart. No human employer can do that. No matter how insignificant the task in the estimate of man, it may be the most glorious accomplishment ever made in the kingdom of God as God evaluates it. **IT IS LOYALTY AND FAITHFULNESS THAT COUNTS WITH GOD!** The parable of the Prodigal Son and the Elder Brother (Lk. 15) is a classic illustration of this principle. The elder brother worked for his father, never left home, never wasted anything, put up a good front of

faithfulness, but doing it all with an ulterior motive, to get special rewards! He did what his father said, not for the father's sake, but to get the farm. He didn't care for his father or his brother. He built a good reputation because he figured that was the smart way to get the biggest reward. BUT, STRANGE TO THE CONCEPTS OF MAN, GOD PENALIZES GOOD CONDUCT IF DONE FOR SELFISH REASONS!

Above everything else, this parable teaches that whatever God gives anyone it is unmerited grace (see Rom. 3:23-24; 4:4-5; 4:16; 5:2; 6:14; Gal. 1:6; 5:4; Eph. 2:5,8; 4:7; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:7; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5; 2 Pet. 3:18, etc.). The very fact that the "Householder" hired some at the 11th hour and gave them the same as those who had borne the burden of the day, proves God is more interested in men than in profit. It proves he is more interested in grace than in merit. THAT MEANS THAT ALL WHO WANT TO DWELL WITH HIM, IN A KINGDOM LIKE THAT, MUST ALSO BE MORE INTERESTED IN GRACE THAN IN MERIT! In other words, we must surrender or capitulate human values and standards to those of heaven (a) let love be genuine, Rom. 12:9; (b) outdo one another in showing honor, Rom. 12:10; (c) rejoice with those who rejoice, Rom. 12:15; (d) each please his neighbor, for his good, to edify (build up) him, Rom. 15:1-2. The imperative question for each Christian to settle is: Can I trust the Lord completely and absolutely to dispense his grace (rewards) fairly, honestly, justly and abundantly as he pleases—or do I feel I must constantly promote myself, depend on my merit, presume that I will have some claim on him which others do not have because I have done more, longer than they have? What might your reaction be when you get to heaven and find the Lord rewarding someone who did not produce as much in statistics as you did? What is your reaction toward that now?

There will be crowns and thrones and honors and rewards even for some humans in the kingdom, but when those with "crowns" get to heaven they "cast their crowns before the throne, singing, 'Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power...' (Rev. 4:10-11; 5:8; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). When Jesus asked the apostles if they could drink his cup, and be "immersed" (baptized) with his immersion (Mk. 10:38), they unhesitatingly replied, "We are able!" Jesus corrected them! "You do not know what you are asking." They still did not understand what the kingdom of God was all about. "You will drink my cup, and be baptized with my baptism," Jesus predicted. At that moment they were not willing to die to self and serve others and to take up the cross of self-denial and follow him to the throne of servant-hood! BUT THEY WOULD, WHEN THEY HAD REPENTED, AND TRUSTED HIM TOTALLY. THEY WOULD WHEN THEY CAPITULATED, SURRENDERED EVERYTHING, INCLUDING THEMSELVES TO HIM. The world has never seen such selflessness (except for Jesus), such total immersion in serving others, such suffering for others, as the apostles gave. There will be crowns and thrones and honors and rewards, but they will be according to preparation to receive them and knowledge as to what to do with them! The words, "it is for those" (Matt. 20:23) are not in the original text. The Greek text would be better and more literally rendered, "It is not mine to grant but for whom it has been prepared by my Father." In other words, preparation is the key. Places of honor and glory will be granted for those most fitted for them. And who are the most "fitted"? "HE WHO WOULD BE GREATEST, LET HIM BE THE SERVANT OF ALL!" (Matt. 20:26-27, etc.).

“Crowns” are for those most like Jesus in servitude to others. Even the chief apostles cannot be sure that some servant of humbler life may not at the end be before them! The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. Perhaps capacity to appreciate, to love, to be content, will have something to do with honor. The “Elder Son” of the Father of the “Prodigal” refused to come into the house and enjoy the feast for his brother and thus showed himself incapable of being honored—while the Prodigal in all humility and repentance, claiming no honor whatsoever, was honored!

No! The disciples should not have been indignant! They were his followers only by his gracious call, in the first place! He proved to them time and again that he was giving them great honor to be serving God’s “Anointed” (the Messiah) in his mission to SAVE THE WORLD. But they were totally and deliberately ignorant of this spiritual honor. Had they not listened and learned from his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount about the nature of a “kingdom-citizen”? Had they not observed Jesus as he served the lowly and the outcast? Evidently NOT! They were acting like the heathen Gentiles. The main work of causing friction seems to have been done by James and John (Mk. 10:35) who came with their mother grasping for places of honor in his kingdom. Unbelievers get power over one another by bribery, flattery, deceit, favoritism and partiality. The heathen do it for selfish reasons—security, influence, fame—all in order that they may be served by others. My! How these apostles were changed after Jesus’ death & resurrection!

Jesus makes it very plain—IT SHALL NOT BE SO AMONG HIS FOLLOWERS. ALL disciples of Jesus must understand what the world does not understand. They must understand that the person who really has any influence over others is the one who receives it willingly from others because he has loved and served them. Any person whose influence depends on force, deceit, flattery, or partiality may have a grudging, fawning, hypocritical, deceitful honor from those over whom he exerts carnal power—but it is not willingly—AND THAT IS A FALSE HONOR! There must be no exertions of force, deceit, flattery or partiality among any of the church’s members in order to gain “positions” of influence or power. Ben Jonson (A.D. 1573-1637), English dramatist and poet, wrote in *Catullus*, “Honour! Tut, a breath, There’s no such thing in nature; a mere term invented to awe fools.” Has any other person in the world’s history been as greatly honored than Jesus Christ?! NO! Yet he was the one person of history who stooped the lowest, served the most, and was most self-denying (Phil. 2:5-11). Richard Littledale (A.D. 1833-1890), English clergyman wrote in the hymn he composed in 1867, entitled, *Come down, O Love divine*, “Let holy charity Mine outward vesture be, And lowliness become mine inner clothing; True lowliness of heart, Which takes the humbler part, And o’er its own shortcomings sweeps with loathing.” That is the only proper attitude for every member church, whether member, elder, preacher, deacon, or teacher today (or in any century)—“...True lowliness of heart, Which takes the humbler part...” (see Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:3). All members of Christ’s church who may have received some honor (“crown”) must be eager and ready to cast it at Jesus’ feet—NOW as well as in heaven!

The careful student of Jesus’ life will need a Harmony of the Gospels from this point

on to the last chapter of Matthew. Matthew records in his 21st chapter what is also recorded in Mk. 11, Lk. 19, and Jn. 12. Bethphage was a village on “the Jericho Road,” about one mile south-east of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, half-way between Jerusalem and Bethany. It is the village from which the disciples were to obtain the “colt” upon which Jesus entered Jerusalem. As the Lord rode upon the “colt” into the city of Jerusalem, he was publicly laying claim to his kingship of Israel! He was claiming his throne NOT as the Gentile world would expect—he was riding on the lowliest of animals (not a white charger like Roman emperors), followed by a multitude of unorganized, oppressed fishermen, carpenters, women, sheep-herders and farmers. Pilate’s attitude toward Jesus’ claims was one of incredulity and indifference from the very beginning (Jn. 18:28—19:22). The common rabble of the Jewish throngs were shouting “Save, now; Save now” (the meaning of the word Hosanna), and “King,” but his garment is not a royal robe—it is a homespun, seamless thing. His court is one of fishermen and publicans; his cavalcade a mob of Galileans. Imagine yourself a Roman soldier that Sunday morning! He was claiming his throne NOT as the Jewish world expected. As he moved toward the city he was creating a great “stir” (Matt. 21:10—Greek *eseisthe*,—we get the English word “seismic” meaning earthquake from this Greek word). But it was an “earthquake” of emotional fanaticism—all on the surface and nothing spiritual about it! Those who shouted “Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel...” and “Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that is coming...” (Mk. 10:10; Lk. 19:11), and “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest...” (Lk. 19:37-38), didn’t know the slightest thing about peace! Just five days later most of this same multitude would be shouting, “Crucify him, crucify him—his blood be upon us and upon our children.” But he WAS CLAIMING HIS THRONE AS GOD INTENDED IT--- royally, freely, not as a prisoner or victim. Jesus did not hide or hurry. He acted deliberately and purposefully. The time had come for the great battle—the ultimate showdown—to begin. The time had come for the world to either acknowledge its Ruler or renounce him. During his public ministry as he was preparing some to carry on his work, he avoided arousing the enthusiasm of the multitudes and the antagonism of the rebellions—BUT NOW, HE PRECIPITATES IT! First he demonstrates his proprietorship of all things by commandeering the colt. His omniscience in regard to the colt’s location and its owner’s behavior proves his Creatorship and ownership. Second, and most important, he entered in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9-10. He was actually signaling the nation that he was the fulfillment of all the Messianic portions of Zechariah (and all the other OT Messianic prophecies). The Zechariah prophecy is considered to be Messianic by the large majority of Jewish rabbis even today—and what does it prophesy from Zech. chs. 9 through 14? (a) the Messiah-King will bring victory, peace and redemption (Zech. Chs. 9-10); (b) he will be the Shepherd-Slave for the nation, sold for a slave’s price, 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11); (c) he will be the Messiah-King who will be pierced and over whom all the tribes of the Jews will eventually mourn when their nation is destroyed (Zech. 12); (d) he would be the Messiah-King who would become a fountain for cleansing by being the Stricken-Shepherd (Zech. 13); (e) he would be the Messiah-King who would bring in the Messianic era of “Tabernacles.” Tabernacles is “ingathering” and as a feast follows the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)—it is highly festive and memorializes redemption from bondage and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. ALL OF THIS JESUS WAS SIGNALING AND SYMBOLIZING FOR THE JEWISH NATION, BUT

THEY WERE OBLIVIOUS TO ITS SPIRITUAL IMPLICATIONS. He is really announcing his Kingship as a fact, not as a proposal, but that it is a Kingship to which he wants them to surrender willingly—a kingship over their attitudes, minds and values. This is what Jesus announces in his parables and other teachings on Monday and Tuesday of the Last Week of his ministry; (f) the text in Luke 19:37-44 must be studied along with the Matthew 21 text in order to understand the whole situation. The crowds were almost hysterical, shouting and screaming, roaring like an earthquake—!—the rulers of the Jews were frustrated, angry and plotting to kill him. As he approached the city he “saw” it and wept (Greek eklausen, means, “heaving with agonizing sobbing”). This was Yerushalam, “Jerusalem” a compound word meaning “Righteousness and Peace,” but it represented the center of all that stood in opposition to the God of peace. Its people did not know the way of peace—not then, not ever (Isa. 57:20-21; 59:8-1)! So Jesus, sitting on the back of the “colt,” sobbing with great heaving sighs, predicts that Jerusalem’s (Judaism’s) rebellion, unwarranted pride and arrogance and greedy materialism would lead to her terrible destruction. The attitudes and circumstances are vividly like those of the days of Jeremiah and the destruction of the Temple and nation by the Babylonians in 586-606 B.C. Daniel prophesied they would be destroyed for “cutting off” the Anointed One of God (Daniel actually uses the Hebrew word Messiah, Dan. 9:24-27). The crowds are unaware of this shocking prophecy by Jesus. They are oblivious to everything except their own delirium about an earthly Messianic kingdom. Even his own apostles were shocked later at this same prediction about the destruction of Jerusalem (i.e., Judaism) (Matt. 23-24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21). That Jerusalem would ever again be destroyed was “outrageous and out-of-the-question” in Jewish thinking! But Jesus’ predictions here and later were fulfilled to the very letter in A.D. 66-70 as Josephus documents in his “Antiquities” and “Wars of the Jews.” Jerusalem and the Jews “did not know the day of their visitation.” The Greek word translated “visitation” is episkopes, Lk. 19:44, and is often translated “bishop, overseer, ruler.” It literally means, “visit to care for like a shepherd.” Although the prophets predicted their God would “visit” men to rule over them (Isa. 7:14; Micah 5:2, etc.)—when they rejected God-Incarnate (Emmanuel), he had to reject them—if they would not know him, they would never know peace.

Jesus cursed the fig tree on Monday but gave the lesson about it on Tuesday—however, we will deal with the lesson here since Matthew puts it all together. The fig tree may grow as a low bush or a tree according to how it is pruned. It may produce fruit without a flower, however inside each fig there are hundreds of tiny flowers which a special kind of wasp has to pollinate in order for the fruit to grow. Common fig trees (in America) produce 2 crops each year—first in late June or early July, second in late August or early September. **FRUIT APPEARS BEFORE LEAVES ON THE COMMON FIG TREE!** That is why Jesus cursed this one—it was a hypocrite tree—giving the appearance of fruit already produced, but it had none! Critics of the Bible object to this miracle because it is contrary to the natural order of things. Well, naturally, it wouldn’t be a miracle if it weren’t contrary to the “natural order of things.” This is the old uniformitarian argument of the evolutionists. But walking on the water and raising the dead to life again are both contrary to the natural order of things! There are even some things in “nature” contrary to the evolutionists’ natural order of things—the 2nd law of thermodynamics and behavior of sub-atomic-particles for two instances! This

miracle, like all others, rests upon the historicity of the NT text, and the competency of its writers. Critics object because in Jesus' healing miracles, the gracious spirit of Jesus is shown, but not here. Well, there are a number of occasions where Jesus does not show a gracious spirit as short-sighted human beings define "gracious." He is not gracious toward the Pharisees (Matt. 23); He predicts terrible judgments at his own hand upon the city (Matt. 24); he drives money-changers out of the temple with a whip (Jn. 2); he sends demons into 2000 pigs and they run down to the sea and drown (Mk. 5:13); he upbraids his own mother and his disciples numerous times. Considering the serious warning and deep spiritual lesson resulting from this, the act is much more gracious than it appears. Some critics of the Bible object to this miracle because they say Jesus is shown to be selfishly angry because his hunger was not satisfied and so he cursed the poor, inanimate object which had no will or intelligence. However, Jesus didn't lose his temper. His motives were not selfish because he could have created as much "bread and fish" he wanted right on the spot—he didn't need the figs from this tree. He wanted to use the tree to teach a great lesson OF FAITH for others. That is more important than keeping a deceitful fig tree alive. Some critics of the Bible object that Jesus, in treating this fig tree as if it were a responsible agent, makes the "story" an absurdity and immoral. Answer: It is not absurd because the tree obeyed! All of creation obeys the voice of its Creator; seas stand still, the sun stands still or goes backward, donkeys speak, a whale spews a prophet out of its mouth, et. al. Jesus is not immoral—the tree is immoral in not obeying God's creative orders. It had leaves but no figs—it was reversing the divine order. Granted, this is a strange story about the meek and mild Jesus. Cursing and destruction were not the usual methods of Jesus. It is the only account of the exercise of his power in the flesh in which he was destructive without some visible help to people. Before criticizing Jesus too severely, think how destructive it is to cut a Christmas tree, or pluck petals from a flower just to see "if he loves me or loves me not." There were leaves—there should have been fruit. This cursing of a fruitless fig tree became a perfectly just illustration of that which Jesus desired to impress on the minds of his apostles—and us. Jesus' one great mission was to produce fruitfulness from this "tree" of Judaism (God's tree). BUT ALL HE FOUND WAS BARRENNESS. HE FOUND AN OUTWARD SHOW OF "LEAVES," BUT NO FRUIT—NOTHING BUT HYPOCRISY. Jesus teaches here that the "fruitless" must inevitably be destroyed (Matt. 3:7-10; Lk. 14:6-9; Jn. 15:5-6). Life is given by God and always for the purpose of fruit-bearing for its Owner and Sustainer. Also, fruitless, non-bearing "trees" would be hindrances to those who have faith. This barren tree of Judaism did not hinder Jesus from bringing salvation to the whole world; neither will any such "isms" hinder one of his disciples from taking the Gospel to the whole world if they believe in Christ! Nothing will hinder God's purposes—people will bear fruit or be cursed and withered.

On Monday, after the "Triumphal Entry," Jesus "threw out" (Greek *exebalen*, literally "threw out by force") those selling and buying and made a "catastrophe" (Greek *katestrepsen*, "upset, overturn, ruin," from which we get the English word "catastrophe") of the moneychangers tables. The rulers were indignant (Greek *eganaktesan*, "hurting with anger") and began right then seeking some way to get him killed (Lk. 19:47). The next day, Tuesday, the chief priests, the scribes and the elders accosted Jesus, demanding that he produce some credentials for the things he had done—they demanded that he show by what

authority he had done such things. These religious leaders had an obligation under the law to honestly challenge any desecration of the Temple or violation of the laws of Moses. BUT JESUS HAD DONE NEITHER! These rulers were the guilty ones! Jesus had cleansed the Temple 3 years earlier (Jn. 2:13-22), and had been demonstrating his credentials (“authority”) for doing so all that time! So Jesus put the onus right back upon them by recalling their ridicule and defiance of John the Baptist. They had rejected the baptism of John (see Lk. 7:30). In a master-stroke Jesus exposed their dishonesty by asking, “The baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men?” The religious rulers immediately recognized they were on “the horns of a dilemma.” They were trapped! They knew how they should answer but tried to find some possible way not to have to do so! Hypocrites! Cowards! If they answered, “From God...” they acknowledge the revelatory nature of JB message and thus that Jesus was the Messiah! If they answered “From men...” they alienated the populace which acclaimed JB a “prophet of God.” They said, “We do not know.” That really exposed their guilt! It was really a confession that they were in opposition to JB message and mission and the evidence Jesus had been giving for 3 years that he was the Messiah. If they could have proved JB was not from God, they would have—they had spent plenty of time investigating him! Their answer showed them to be either the dumbest people in Israel or the most blatant liars! Notice, Jesus specifically asked about JB “baptism” (which was authoritative from God for repentance unto remission of sins), rather than John’s teaching! (a) because of the uniqueness of the act of immersing people in water for remission of sins and repentance; (b) there could be no quibbling or hedging on this issue—baptism was a concrete, vivid, impressive act and no one could say, “What teaching?”; (c) because baptism, immersion of the entire person into water for remission of sins was doctrinally innovative—if not from God, it would be apostasy—if from God, it would mean the animals sacrifices of the law of Moses were obsolete; (d) the only logical and honest conclusion was either to accept JB as from God, or prove JB to be an imposter. In refusing to answer their question about his “authority” Jesus really answered it: (a) he let the logic of his question speak for itself, and that exposed vividly the hypocrisy of the rulers; (b) he really didn’t need to answer them, for he had already forced them to answer in their own minds their own question—they just would not admit it publicly; (c) they were not asking for information—but for evil purposes so they did not deserve to have the truth just so they might pervert it and use it for wickedness; (d) if they were blind to the evidences for JB coming from God, they would be blind to any evidence Jesus might present for himself.

Jesus proceeds to tell two parables to symbolize his Lordship (a third one we will study in the 22nd chapter of Matthew). These two parables expose the hidden evil motives and intentions of the rulers of the nation. That Jesus was 100% correct in reading their minds is shown by their own admissions (Matt. 21:45; Mk. 12:12; Lk. 20:19). They refuse to answer about their evaluation of JB’s “baptism”—Jesus will force them to answer through the use of a parable or two! A man had two sons. The first son was thought to be worthless! He said, “I will not, but afterward repented and went....” This symbolizes the “harlots and publicans and Gentiles.” This bad boy was guilty from weakness, not from intentional arrogance of self-righteousness. It is easier for honest evil to reform than dishonest virtue! Of course Jesus is not praising harlotry or extortion, but it is true that sins of fleshly

indulgence or weakness are often easier to repent of than hypocrisy and self-righteousness—remember the Prodigal and the Elder Brother! And, of course, there is nothing admirable about being a harlot or an extortioner, and nothing worse than being proud of it! In America we have the “activists” who cry out against the “hypocrisy” of the “establishment” and then indulge in all sorts of immorality! We have the “peace-niks” who protest armaments or law-enforcement or “environmental spoiling” and then throw bricks and Molotov-cocktails destroying people and property to prove it! We have the “minority groupies” who trespass on private and public property to cry out for “justice” and then when in power defraud the tax-payers of millions of dollars. With God the Father, words and promises from his sons (you and I) can never substitute for deeds and services! The second son said, “I go sir, but did not.” He represents the Jewish religious rulers of that day. Those religious people—pillars of the “church,” notoriously guilty of promising great things, making big splashes, but deep down it is all for themselves. They talk a great game, but never get around to really doing what the Father orders them to do! The second son gave a superficial, quick, outward show of superior behavior, but when it came to the nitty-gritty, “Where the rubber meets the road,” he was a “flat tire.” Hypocrisy is always the hazard of the Christian, stalking hard on the heels of every disciple. God wants to use men for his glory and their good, but men are always trying to use God for their glory and to hurt others. The “rascal” son finally obeyed, but the “good boy” was good to himself, for himself, and good for nothing for the Father. His goodness was in name and appearance only, but it was actually a goodness used against the Father, which, after all, is the most self-deceiving method of trying to hide from the Father. SAYING AND NOT DOING WILL NOT HIDE ANYONE FROM THE OMNISCIENT FATHER! Jesus used this parable to force the Jews to face themselves with their deliberate refusal to obey the message of John the Baptist and the Christ and thus to show them they were disobeying God whom they had sworn to obey! Notice the force of the word “did” in 21:31—they knew right away who “did” the will of the father. Jesus did not ask, “Who knew the will of the father....” but, “Who did the will of the father...” (cf. Matt. 7:21-27; Lk. 6:46; James 1:22-25). This may be the second great question ever asked! MEN ARGUE ABOUT KNOWING THE WILL OF THE FATHER, BUT JESUS ASKS, “YES, YES, BUT WHICH OF THESE DID THE WILL OF HIS FATHER?”

This parable applies primarily to the Jewish nation which crucified Jesus Christ. The figure of a vine and vineyard to portray God’s chosen people, Israel, was well known to the Jews (see Psa. 80:8-18; Isa. 5:1-10; Jer. 2:21; 6:9; 8:13; 12:10; Ezek. 15:1-8; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1). Herod had an ornate and expensive golden grape-vine embossed on the great gate of the Temple in his day. Often Jewish farmers merely rented or “share-cropped” the vineyards. The share-cropper did the labor, and divided a fixed amount of the vintage crop with the owner. Jesus was using an illustration in the realm of Jewish literature, of everyday life, and nationalist symbolism. It should be plain that the Owner of the vineyard is God, the Vineyard is the Covenant of Redemption, the tenants are the Jewish people, the servants were the OT prophets, the Heir is Jesus Christ, the Messiah. JESUS INFERS IN THIS PARABLE THAT THE JEWISH PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE RULERS, RECOGNIZED THE HEIR WELL ENOUGH TO DECIDE TO KILL HIM! In the parable the “wicked servants” (Jews) took things into their own hands as soon as the Landlord (God) gave them the

vineyard to keep for him. When the Landlord sent other servants (the OT prophets and JB) to collect the rent, the tenants showed their rebellion and contempt for the Landlord by treating the servants shamefully. When the Landlord sent his Son, they killed him, because they saw he was the heir! This parable is really a conclusion to Isaiah's vineyard parable (Isa. 5:1-11). The Jews had many opportunities and privileges following Isaiah's expose of their disobedience. Even before the Son of the Landlord came the "wicked servants" were disobedient. This parable re-enforces Jesus' manifestation of authority over the Jewish nation in the Triumphal Entry and Cleansing of the Temple, for in this parable Jesus declares that he has come to demand fruit from them, and that he is the heir! The Jewish nation had been blessed above all the nations of the earth, not because they deserved it, but because of God's sovereign grace. He blessed them for a purpose. That was to produce a people of righteousness (Amos 3:12; Deut. 26:19; 28:9-10). But they wanted to have what God gave them for themselves and to produce nothing for him. While there is strong emphasis in this parable on God's longsuffering and patience (he sent even his Son to these killers), there is also strong emphasis that the patience of God can be exhausted! There is a limit even to divine grace! After the wicked servants refused to acknowledge the Son and killed him, no more mercy could be shown! Why? BECAUSE GOD HAS REACHED THE LIMITS OF WHAT HE CAN DO AND STILL LEAVE PEOPLE TO BE FREE MORAL BEINGS! If people will reject the Incarnate Word (the Son) what else can God do? This is the greatest crime of all! Jesus said of the Jews they, "Filled up the measure of their fathers" (Matt. 23:29-39)... "and finished the transgression" (Dan. 9:24), and were "guilty of all murder from Able to Christ." Jesus led this audience to the inexorable logic that God was going to reject the "wicked husbandmen"—AND THEY KNEW WHO THESE "WICKED HUSBANDMEN" WERE! To this parable Jesus added the prophecy of the OT (Psa. 118:22; Isa. 28:16) that the Jews would "reject the chief cornerstone God would send upon which to build the "kingdom of God"—the church. That the Messiah was God's "key-stone" is thoroughly documented in the Bible (Psa. 118:22; Isa. 28:16; Zech. 4:7; 10:4; Isa. 8:14; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:6-7; Eph. 2:20; Rom. 9:33). Jesus plainly told this audience that the kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews and given to a nation producing the fruits of the kingdom (Matt. 21:43). That "nation" would be the "new Israel" composed of both Jew and Gentile, which would listen to the Messiah and believe (Acts 13:46-48; 28:28). The "new Israel" would be a "new creation" (Gal. 6:15-16; 2 Cor. 5:11-21). The rulers of the Jews "perceived" that he had told this parable "against" them (Lk. 20:19). The Greek words "against them" are *pros autous*, meaning, "toward them." In other words Jesus told this parable and point it directly at the rulers!

So this lesson is all about Jesus' authority. Ideas and objects and events may be either true or false; conduct may be either right or wrong.. Finite human beings, therefore, need some test or standard or court of appeal which distinguishes the real from the unreal, the true from the false, the right from the wrong—and has the authority to enforce the standard. If we are to attach any intelligible meaning with any definiteness to the distinction between things as they merely appear to be, and things as they really are, we must clearly have some universal criterion or test by which the distinction may be made. This criterion must be in the first place infallible to such an extent that we cannot doubt its validity without

falling into a contradiction in our thought. It is freedom from contradiction that distinguishes everything and anything that is real.

John Warwick Montgomery has focused on the human predicament in his book, *Where Is History Going?* when he discusses the deficiencies in human philosophies of history as reflecting the Human Predicament: "...(1) the lack of absolute historical perspective on the part of a finite man (is) because a man stands in history at a particular place and cannot see into the future, he cannot possibly demonstrate that his conception of total history will have permanent validity; (2) from the same lack of perspective he cannot in any absolute sense know what is more or less significant or valuable in the total history of mankind; (3) moreover, his conception of human nature can have only a limited value, and is certainly not an adequate basis for historical generalizations; (4) the human ethical ideals will also reflect his stance in history and will not be capable of justification in absolute terms."

Since no mortal sits in a house by the side of the road and watches all of history pass by, no one, from a secular humanistic viewpoint, can answer the questions, "Where is history going?" and "What is life all about?" What humans need is someone from "outer space" who knows the historical process in its entirety. Such a Supernatural Person did invade the human sphere in the Person of Jesus Christ—revealed to men the nature and significance of history and of human life and brought men into contact with eternal values. THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY THEN REALLY FOCUSES ON THE PROOF AND DEFINITION OF GOD. This is precisely the focus of the Incarnation of Christ. This is precisely what Christ came to do and what he did indeed do—he proved the existence and nature of God, for he was God. In Matthew 21 we have his (a) basis for authority (fulfilled prophecy, life and teachings, miracles); (b) extent of authority over man's deeds, life, dealings with God, access, covenant-relationship, and motives; (c) alternative to his authority—try to escape, try to kill the heir, but judgment comes. IF CHRIST IS WRONG ABOUT HIS AUTHORITY, THEN WE MUST SAY SO—BUT ONLY ON THE BASIS OF EVIDENCE AND NOT FEELING OR CHOICE.

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 22:1 – 23:39

The gospel truth is that the kingdom of God is comparable to just such a perfectly marvelous time as a marriage feast. But most of the world never understands that being a disciple of Jesus is a privilege and joy. Most think of it as the “nose to the grind-stone,” or “can’t be righteous and have a good time” syndrome. In the parable, the “king” sent two invitations. The first invitation was flatly refused. It seems incredible that anyone would refuse an invitation to a royal wedding feast! The second invitation was more explicit and urgent. Everything was prepared. No detail left undone. No expenses spared in preparing. But this invitation is met with mockery and contempt! To those invited, their business interests meant more to them than the invitation to a glorious party in the presence of their king. Going to the king’s feast would be a waste of time to them—they could be doing what they considered of supreme importance—their own affairs. How twisted their values and priorities! As good and needful as business is, it is not meant to sidetrack us from the best. That attitude was a “slap in the face,” an insult to the king! This parable applies specifically to the Jewish nation. God sent his “army” (the Roman empire), to destroy the Jewish nation in A.D. 70, for mocking his invitation to the Son’s marriage feast—the Christian gospel. Indifference, leading to contempt, and rebellious murdering of the king’s messengers (servants) brought judgment from the king’s “army.” The goodness of the king is not quenched by the contempt of the ingrates. He sends his messengers (servants) out into the “parting of the highways” and invites all who will to “come” (Rev. 22:17). So God’s invitation to the “feast” went out to those “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world...” GENTILES (Eph. 2:12). God will not let stubbornness ruin his celebration—he will be faithful even if every man is a liar (Rom . 3:4). The issue is not who we are, but how we respond! The king provides everything—EVEN THE WEDDING GARMENT. But if we are contemptuous or indifferent or think to get in without the garment, we are not fit for anything but the wrath of the king. Ancient kings and princes were accustomed to make presents of changes of raiment to their friends and guests (Gen. 45:22; 2 Kings 10:22; Esther 6:8; 8:15). It was expected that such garments would be worn on festival occasions, especially when the recipient was invited to the benefactor’s home for a feast or party. To refuse to receive or wear such a gift at the king’s parties was an expression of highest contempt. The man had a garment provided for him but attempted to be a guest at the wedding feast without it. His conduct was inexcusable, he was ungrateful and disrespectful. The man is not innocent—HE DID NOT INTEND to have the garment on. He was saying, in effect, “I have garments that please me, they are as good as any the King has provided in my estimation and if the King doesn’t like what I have on he can lump it!” This man mocked the King by coming dressed to please himself. This is making the motions of respecting the king’s feast, while inwardly laughing and scoffing at it. The “garment” is symbolic of our being clothed with the righteousness of Christ, provided by our King, God. He sends us the robes of the righteousness of Christ to “put on.” When we believe and are baptized, we “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 13:14) and

so long as the fruits of repentance are produced in our lives by the Holy Spirit, we keep the garment on. It is up to us to put the garment on and allow the Spirit to keep it on. Paul, the ex- Pharisee, desired "...to be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith...(Phil. 3:9). There is no issue in life more important than responding to the invitation of the King for his Son's marriage feast. Those who respond to the invitation, had better not try to fool the King about their sincerity. Attempting to be God's guest without the wedding garment will not prove anything to the King except contempt. YOU MUST ACCEPT HIS GARMENT AND PUT IT ON...YOU DO NOT HAVE ANY GARMENTS THAT WILL PLEASE HIM...THEY ARE ALL AS "FILTHY RAGS" (Isa. 64:6). When will people ever learn that to come to God's feast they do not bring anything! GOD PREPARES EVERYTHING! HE GIVES EVERYTHING! EVEN THE GARMENTS! ATTEMPTING TO ATTEND BY BRINGING YOUR OWN SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS IS CONTEMPTUOUS MOCKERY—Even what we give the Bridegroom he gives us to give back to him (1 Chron. 29:14-19)!

The Sadducees came with a guise (in the form of a theological question) to try to destroy Jesus' reputation as a rabbi (teacher) in the judgment of the people. Their "question" dealt with the human speculations about immortality—life after death! Sadducees were the humanists of that age. Their sect probably originated with Zadok, famous priest of David's day (2 Sam. 15:24; 1 Kings 1:32; Ezek. 40:46; 43:19; 44:15; 48:11). The name Sadducee probably comes from the Hebrew word zadyik, meaning, "a righteous person." It may have been a sarcastic nickname given them by others or a boastful one given by themselves. They believed in preserving the nation by reason, diplomacy and prudence. They asserted that Jews need keep only the "essential" parts of the Mosaic Law, and in everything where Moses did not speak they might act according to "the requirements of the time." They were pragmatic toward the attempts of the Seleucid (Syrian) conquerors to Hellenize (Greek-ize) the Jewish culture during the Maccabean era (300-100 B.C.) They were wealthy, controlled the temple, and were in direct opposition in almost every issue with the Pharisees. The Sadducees secretly hated the Romans, but for the good of their nation and their "positions" they compromised every principle of right to maintain their personal control over religion and finances. Although they were the priestly party they did not believe in Divine providence, miracles, angels, resurrection from the dead, or the OT prophets. They came to Jesus with a hypothetical question—their stock argument, no doubt, against the possibility of a resurrection from the dead. They proposed the riddle of a woman married to 7 husbands all whom had preceded her in death without ever giving the woman a child. The woman eventually died also, and their riddle was, "Whose wife shall she be in the resurrection, since she had 7 husbands? They started, of course, with the a priori that the doctrine of life after death was false and then made up an absurd illustration to prove their point. Did you notice how they arranged their story so all the woman's husbands were brothers, making it conform to the Levirate law (Deut. 25:5-6). They thought this would give the added impact of inferring the Law of Moses denied immortality because the Law made life after death an impossibility! If a child had been born to one of the husbands it might have solved the question as to whose wife she would be in heaven—so they craftily omit children. Jesus' answer: "You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God." All humanists make

the unforgivable mistake of a priori reasoning on the subject of life after death and reject the scriptural record as unworthy of consideration. Here are the Sadducees claiming to prove there is no life after death to the Man who has raised three people from the dead already! But amazingly, Jesus doesn't even appeal to those 3 factual incidents—HE APPEALS TO SCRIPTURE (Old Testament Scripture). The Scriptures claim to be an accurate documentation of historical events. They demand to be tested. If their historicity can be established by all the accepted canons (rules) of historical verification, they deserve to be studied and believed. The Sadducees were either innocently ignorant or deliberately ignorant of what the Old Testament said about life after death. The OT says this: (a) there are actual documented cases of resurrection from death in the OT (1 Kings 17:22; 2 Kings 4:35; 13:21); (b) there are documented cases of "translation" from this life to the next without experiencing death (one in the Pentateuch) (Gen. 5:22-24; 2 Kings 2:11); (c) there is one case, documented by eyewitnesses, of the reappearance of a man (Samuel) after he had died (1 Sam. 28:12-19); (d) there are many declarations in the OT of immortality and eternity (2 Sam. 12:15-23; Psa. 16:8; 23:4-6; Isa. 53:10-12; Eccl. 3:11; 12:5-14; Job 19:25-26; Exodus 3:6); (e) statements in Genesis of the patriarchs who died and were buried, and "gathered to their people" (Gen. 25:8; 35:29), infer immortality. Not only did the Sadducees not know the scriptures—THEY DID NOT KNOW THE POWER OF GOD. This becomes a problem at times even for those who have accepted the historicity and integrity of the Biblical record. The Christians in Corinth to whom Paul wrote had this problem. They said, "Since we have no earthly experience by which to determine what kind of body we will have in the resurrection, we have doubts that there will be one!" (1 Cor. 15). Paul told them, essentially, just what Jesus said here: God has the power to do in the next life what he has never done in the earthly life. The fundamental ignorance of man is his presumption that life after death, if there is one, would have to be like this life. That is because man wants to reject anything outside his own experience lest he find out he is not his own sovereign. Man does not want to admit there is another Sovereign beyond himself able to do things he himself is not able to do. An all-powerful God has power to transcend and overcome all the inadequacies and incongruities of this existence by creating another existence, different and everlasting, yet incorporating the best of this one. Jesus said there would be no marriage or sexual intercourse in heaven. Procreation will not be necessary because eternal life. Those who have experienced the joys of marriage for any length of time can hardly imagine an eternity without a spouse, yet the apostle Paul was convinced that the next life would be "very far better" than any experience in this life (Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 4:17-18). C. S. Lewis wrote that as Christians we know the joys of sexual life within marriage—but we do not know, except in glimpses, the "better" thing, which in heaven, leaves no room for the lesser sensation of earthly life. In denying the sexual life, as we now understand it, it is not necessary to suppose that the distinction of sexes or personalities will disappear—what is no longer needed (sexual distinction) for biological purposes may be expected to survive for splendor. What the Bible says is quite different than what humanists say. Here is just one quotation from The Humanist Manifesto, 1933, updated in 1973 and called Humanist Manifesto II: "We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural...Humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves. Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and

harmful...The universe is self-existing and not created. The mind or soul does not exist apart from the body..." Humanist Corliss Lamont wrote, "Humanists live for actions, ideals on this Earth in our one and only life. Heaven must be built in this world or not at all....While we're here, let's live in clover, when we're dead, we're dead all over." IF WHAT THE HUMANISTS, APART FROM GOD, HAVE BUILT ON THIS EARTH FOR THE ALLEGED HISTORY OF THE HUMAN RACE FOR OVER 2 MILLION YEARS IS HEAVEN, LET THE HUMANISTS HAVE IT! I'LL STAKE MY LIFE ON THE HISTORICALLY VERIFIABLE REVELATION FROM GOD, THE BIBLE, THAT THERE IS LIFE AFTER DEATH AND A HEAVEN & A HELL!

Jesus answered the lawyer's (scribe's) question (Matt. 22:34-40; Mk. 12:28-34) as to which was the "greatest commandment" by reciting what the Jewish religion calls the The Shema. The Shema is found in Deut. 6:4-5. It is estimated by the "rabbis" that the Law of Moses has 613 commandments. The religious leaders of the day (scribes and lawyers) spent most of their time in superficialities—making hairsplitting distinctions between laws and traditions (cf. Matt. 15 & 23). Most rabbis were of the opinion that the law of the Sabbath observance outweighed all other commandments—others thought the laws of purification were most important—but the Shema of Deut. 6:4-5 was of such magnificence and importance as the "first" of all commandments, the Pharisees selected it as one of the 4 passages which they wore in their phylacteries. A few of them recognized the significance of the 2nd commandment (Lk. 10:25-28) but had trouble defining who a neighbor was. The Hebrew Shema is recited today by orthodox Jews every morning and evening. The first two verses of scripture taught to Jewish children are Deut. 6:4-5. It is a declaration of the eternalness and non-variance of Jehovah. It distinguishes Jehovah from all pagan gods—from the idea of polytheism. There are no gods besides him. It emphasizes God's oneness and teaches his universal sovereignty (Rom. 3:29). He is God of the Gentiles too—if he is One. He is the One source of all that exists. The part about "loving one's neighbor as oneself" is not in the modern Jewish Shema. Jesus added Leviticus 19:17-18 to the Shema and made it all one "great" commandment. Jesus' use of these two commandments was unique for the emphasis he gave to "neighbor" (Lk. 20:25-28) and his emphasis that all the Law and the Prophets were encompassed in them. All the law and the prophets (i.e., all the Old Testament) "hang" on this statement of Jesus because it encompasses the three fundamentals of human existence: (a) the nature of God's being; (b) man's relationship to God; (c) man's relationship to his fellow man. EQUALLY SIGNIFICANT IS THE TEACHING THAT LOVE IS REPRESENTED AS THE SUM OF THE DIVINE-HUMAN RELATIONSHIP. "Love is the fulfilling of the law" Rom. 13:8-10. The first commandment, i.e., loving God with all your being emphasizes the whole realm of man's life controlled by God and devoted to him. C. S. Lewis said this is why the real problem of the Christian life comes where people do not usually look for it. "It comes the very moment you wake up each morning. All your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And then the first job each morning consists simply in shoving them all back; in listening to that other voice—the greatest commandment—Love God with all your being. We can only do it for moments at first. But from those moments the new sort of life will be spreading through all our system; because now we are letting him work at the right part of us. It is the difference between

paint, which is merely laid on the surface, and a dye or stain, which soaks right through.” Faith in the “oneness” (i.e., sovereignty) of God comes before morals—but cannot be separated from morals. Our love of God and commitment to his Lordship is the source and directing power of our love for man. Commitment to God’s revealed will is the direction of standard of our love to man. Mark says Jesus commended the scribe and told him he was not far from the kingdom, Mark 12:32-34, because: (a) the scribe was sharp in his discernment of Jesus’ statement; (b) he had a sincere desire to know; (c) he was fair-minded enough to be open with Jesus; (d) he was remarkably courageous to commend Jesus publicly; (e) he had a deeper understanding than most Jews to be able to say this commandment was more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Psa. 51: Isa. 1:10-20; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8; Jer. 6:20; Malachi 1:10); (f) yet the scribe’s very question indicated the superficial attitude of these Jews toward God’s word. People are still doing the same today—substituting superficial saintliness for the two fundamental issues: (a) people substitute busyness for the fundamentals; (b) they substitute traditions for the fundamentals; (c) they substitute “success mentality” for God’s grace (d) and even think works are the garments the King wants when we attend his feast! THE REAL ONE FUNDAMENTAL OF LIFE NOW IS IN THE NEXT QUESTION!

Human beings sit around and argue about ethics and morals. Philosophers and theologians split hairs over codes of conduct. Politicians argue about social and governmental issues; Religionists speculate about life after death. BUT THESE ARE PERIPHERALS...TRIVIALITIES...NOT REALLY THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES OF LIFE. They are issues that men would like to know about. They are issues that have some practical application to man’s total understanding of himself and his circumstances—but they are just questions and not answers. THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE THAT SETTLES ALL THESE QUESTIONS IS: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF JESUS OF NAZARETH—WHOSE SON IS HE? (Matt. 22:41-46). The Jews had the answer—they thought! “The Son of David!” they immediately replied. (They meant, a totally human son of David). The Jews for the most part, including Jesus’ apostles before his resurrection, were never able to understand that the Messiah (“Christ”) was to be God, Incarnate, and non-Christian Jews still do not believe it today! I quote: “...the Jewish view of Jesus. We know he lived and have a vague idea of what he preached but there it ends. The widespread idea that the Jews, while rejecting Jesus’ claim to divinity, consider him a great teacher and moral figure is completely false. We do not accept his claims and we are oblivious to his teachings; we are simply not interested in him nor in what he had to say....” (emphasis ptb’s) from Living Jewish, by Michael Asheri, 1978, Everest House, p. 224. So Jesus asked his Jewish audience another question, quoting from Psa. 110, “How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord...” In other words, “How can the Messiah be both the son of David and the Lord of David?” Using their OT Jesus documented that the Messiah was to be more than David’s son—indeed the Messiah was to be David’s Lord! The statement of David in Psa. 110:1 can be understood in no other way. There David represents Jehovah speaking to David’s Lord (Heb. Adonai) who is also David’s Son, enthroning Him at Jehovah’s right hand (co-equal). THE JEWS SHOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE MESSIAH TO BE GOD IN THE FLESH! (see also Micah 5:2; Isa. 7:14, Dan. 9:26; Zech. 9:9; Mal. 3:1-2, etc.).

Jesus rejected the hypocrisy of the Pharisees straight out! The Pharisees preached, but did not practice what they preached. They “played a stage role” which is what the word *hupokritai*, means in the Greek language. Jesus also said, *Epi tes Mouses kathedras ekathisan oi grammateis kai oi pharisaioi*, literally, “Upon the Moses-seat sit the scribes and the Pharisees.” The Greek verb *ekathisan* is aorist indicative 3 person plural, meaning, they had seated themselves in the chair of Moses. There is a difference if they sit there with God’s divine permission and authentication, than if they have “seated themselves.” The Greek word for “seat” is *kathedras* from which we get the English word, *cathedra*, and *cathedral*, denoting “a seat of authority.” When the Roman Catholic pope speaks, “*ex-cathedra*” he is allegedly speaking with divine authority! While the scribes and Pharisees “seated themselves” on the “Moses-seat” God allowed them to assert their assumed authority and Jesus told the multitudes to give attention to their teaching. Jesus undoubtedly meant that when the scribes and Pharisees tell the multitudes what the Law of Moses says (not their ungodly “traditions”) the multitudes are to give heed. Thus the multitudes would be heeding the Law of Moses and not the “traditions” of the rabbis. JESUS CLEARLY STOOD FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT TO BE OBEYED WHENEVER TAUGHT (EVEN IF TAUGHT BY HYPOCRITES), BUT NOT WHEN THEY ADDED TO OR SUBTRACTED FROM IT BY THEIR HYPOCRITICAL LIVING AND TRADITIONS! GOD’S WORD IS TRUE EVEN IF EVERY MAN, INCLUDING THOSE WHO TEACH IT, ARE LIARS AND HYPOCRITES (Rom. 3:4) AND THOSE WHO HEAR THE UNADULTERATED WORD OF GOD (EVEN FROM THE LIPS OF HYPOCRITES) ARE WARNED BY JESUS TO DO IT!

The Pharisees shut off the kingdom of God so thoroughly they neither entered themselves nor allowed those who would to enter. They rejected John the Baptist’s teachings about the kingdom of God (Lk. 7:29-30). They violently opposed Jesus’ teaching and works and threatened all who tried to hear him (cf. Jn. 7:45-52; 9:18-34, etc.). They taught their traditions as superior to and more authoritative than the Word of God itself. They did not practice what they themselves preached. They misinterpreted OT prophecy. They persecuted any who chose to believe Jesus. They trusted in their own self-righteousness. While posing as teachers of the Law and the Prophets, they actually kept the multitudes in ignorance by “taking away the key of knowledge” (see Lk. 11:52) which is the knowledge that Jesus was God-Incarnate (Col. 2:3,7; Jn. 14:6). They compassed land and sea to make one convert (“proselyte”) and then made him twice more a son of hell than themselves. The “scribes and Pharisees” simply cluttered the Word of God over with such heaps and heaps of traditions and held their traditions as more authoritative than the Word itself (if you don’t believe it, get a copy of a modern Talmud and read it) that the “unlettered” multitudes could not FIND the real word of God had they wanted to! Those who arrogantly defend their denominational, non-Biblical creeds and “traditional interpretations” as more authoritative than the Word of God itself, in order to make themselves the exclusively acceptable people of God, are “shutting the kingdom” today! Let Christians be careful what they “win” people with, because what you win them with, you win them to! Those won to Christ and his Word are citizens of the heavenly kingdom. Those who put denominational creeds and misinterpretations more authoritative than God’s word are not kingdom citizens!

The Pharisees and scribes neglected the weightier matters of God's law. They meticulously counted out every 10th dill seed for legal correctness. The Talmud says: "Of dill must one tithe the seed, and the leaves and the stalks." But they were unconcerned about fairness, truth, rights of others, love of God by being merciful to men. They delicately "strained out minute little gnats," and greedily "swallowed huge camels." The intent of God's law is truth, goodness, mercy (Micah 6:6-8; Isa. 8:16-22; 51:7; 58:1-14; Jer. 6:-21, etc.). A man may never strike his neighbor or cheat him—but then a man may never help his neighbor, either! BUT IN SUCH LEGALISTIC STRAINING OF GNATS, A MAN IS NEGLECTING THE WEIGHTIER MATTERS OF GOD'S LAW! Even giving one's money to the church is not keeping God's law if it is done from the wrong motive (2 Cor. 9:5-8). IS IT ONLY THE BIG THINGS THAT COUNT WITH GOD? NO!! "These you ought to have done....etc" LARGE OR SMALL, DETAILS OR ESSENTIALS, IT IS MOTIVE THAT COUNTS! Outwardly, the scribes and Pharisees went through all the rituals of "cleansing and purification." They appeared to be very concerned with purity and holiness. Inwardly, however, they were filled with wickedness. Matthew 23:24 in the Greek text is: harpages kai akrasias. Harpages means, "plundering, pillage, carrying off by force, rape, rapacity" and akrasias means "incontinence, lack of self-control, excess, indulgence." Outwardly they appear (Greek horaioi) "in season, prime, luscious, ripe, lovely" and dikaioi, "righteous, just, upright." But inwardly they are full of (Greek osteon nekron kai pases akatharsias) "bones of deadmen and all uncleanness" and (Greek hupokriseos kai anomias) "hypocrisy, and lawlessness." Painting over the outside does not clean up the inside. How does one paint the outside? With correct rituals; proper cliches; acceptable associations; humanitarianism. But man cannot achieve life with a holy God by just painting the outer behavior with ceremonies and shibboleths. These "paintings" have no power to deal with the roots of carnality, worldly-mindedness, and lawless attitudes. The great issue is: What is getting into the mind and heart of a man and taking up residence there (see Matt. 15:13-20). It is what we believe from what we are taught that effects a change in life! We cannot hide our heart and mind from God by putting on a false face—an outward white-washing. We may live a "clean" life in public, but have we examined our motives lately? The Bible is a spiritual mirror that reflects our real nature as God knows it and sees it (cf. Heb. 4:11-13). To really change the inside we need "with unveiled face to behold the glory of the Lord and be changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18). We must "bring every thought into captivity to obedience to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5)—THAT'S HOW THE INSIDE IS CLEANED UP! It is a matter of Biblical record that ONLY WHEN THE HEART IS RIGHT WILL GOD ACCEPT ANY OUTWARD ACTION AS BEING RIGHT! (See our comments on the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5-6-7). The inevitable consequence of fanatical legalism is the externalization of religion. Every attempt to enforce a law where the word of God is not specific in order to earn merit necessitates another law to protect one's earnings (lest he lose them by demerit). This, of course, is followed by an emphasis upon formal correctness and not upon purity of motive.

Outwardly the scribes and Pharisees gave the impression they revered God's prophets of old times. They sanctimoniously adorned their tombs. They spoke the names of their OT prophets with a show of reverence and boasted in their greatness. But in their open

hatred of Jesus and John the Baptist, they showed a wicked heart that would have, like their forefathers, actually killed the prophets had they lived in olden days! In fact, they would soon kill THE PROPHET—JESUS CHRIST. They would also kill “wise men” and “prophets” (i.e., apostles and Christian evangelists) sent later by Jesus’ great commission. To kill those sent by God is actually an attempt to kill God! Jesus’ terrible prediction about the Pharisees was: “Fill up then the measure of your fathers...” The climax of ALL HUMAN defiance of God was going to be perpetrated by the Jewish nation in the murder of God’s Son! Daniel 9:24 says the Jews would be allotted 490 years to do a number of things—one of which was “to finish the transgression.” At the end of 490 years from the re-establishment of their commonwealth under Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews would “fill up the cup of their rebellion to the brim and crucify the Messiah.” Paul speaks in 1 Thess. 2:13-16 of the Jews “filling up the measure of their sins (and) God’s wrath would come upon them to completion” (Gr. eis to anaplerosai auton tas hamartias pantote ephthasen de ep autous he orge eis telos, literally, “...unto the limit of their sins, evermore, but upon them the wrath has come completely!” (See also Lk. 11:47-51; Matt. 21:33-43; Jn. 15:22-27; Acts 2:22-23; 3:13-15; 4:25-28 7:51-53). The greatest sin in the world is to crucify God’s Son. All other rebellion against God’s word is summed up in that one rebellion. It is possible to “crucify the Son of God afresh”—by attempting to secure atonement and access to God through something other than Christ and his church (Heb. 6:1-6). If we revert to “law-keeping” for righteousness before God (whether the Law of Moses or a “law” we devise for ourselves) we crucify the Son of God afresh! Pharisees and scribes killed Christ—the greatest crime. And men today crucify him, count him worthless and in-the-way, by rejecting his atonement in favor of their own systems of self-righteousness or any other “way” to God than Jesus (Jn. 14:6).

One of the most amazing things about Jesus was his attempts to save these hell-bent hypocrites—the pernicious scribes and Pharisees. Most of us would have written them off without so much as a “fare thee well...” BUT NOT THE LOVING LORD JESUS! He dared to face them with unwelcome truth in the sure knowledge of inevitable rejection and murder by their hands. He extended them patience, mercy and forgiveness—he even dared to love them. Dare we do less with 20th century hypocrites? But Jesus’ love was a “tough love.” He said to them, “Behold your house is forsaken and desolate.” This is Jesus’ prophecy of the climactic act of God toward the Jewish nation and system, the destruction of Judaism with the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, to indicate that all their legalistic hypocrisy was useless. Matthew recorded the words of Jesus in Greek, idou aphietai humin ho oikos humon eremos, literally, “Behold, abandoned unto you, the house of you is desolate.” The Greek word for “desolate” is eremos, meaning, “a desert, wilderness, uninhabited place, deserted.” Judaism without Christ is desolate, hopeless, useless. Once before when they rejected him and profaned his house God left their house unto them desolate (Ezek. 8:6; 10:18; 11:23). NOT MANY JEWS LEARNED FROM THE BABYLONIAN DESOLATION! Now Jesus promises their “house” will be left to them like a desert finally and completely. Jeremiah 3:15-16 indicates that when the Messiah comes the Jews should not “remember the ark of the covenant of the Lord, bring it to mind or miss it, nor should they make it again!” There will be no “remnant” left to them except the ones following Christ (his church). Jesus often willed (Greek ethelesa, aorist, indicative active, “desired, purposed, aimed”) to gather the Jews

tenderly and protectively, but they willed not (Greek kai ouk ethelesate, aorist indicative active verb with negative particle, ouk). VERY FEW OF THE JEWS LEARNED GOD'S MESSAGE FROM THE ROMAN DESOLATION! AS A PEOPLE THEY CONTINUE RIGHT ON IN THEIR REBELLION, REJECTING THE SON OF GOD, JESUS OF NAZARETH, HOPING TO PLEASE GOD IN A SYSTEM WITH WHICH GOD IS NO LONGER PLEASED! (See the entire book of Hebrews). But then, so does the Gentile world, for the most part, continue right on in its rebellion, rejecting the Son, never learning from the destruction of Jewish nation etched and unerasable in the annals of history! That great holocaust was a TYPE of the final judgment on an unbelieving self-righteous, hypocritical world as Jesus indicated in Matthew chapter 24 (our next lesson).

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 24:1 – 25:46

Complexity of this text makes it essential: (a) that the student avail himself of a harmony of the gospel accounts as an aid to understanding it—the other two “synoptic” (i.e., “seen-together” or “parallel”) Gospels, Mark and Luke, have the same discourse but with significant additions to that of Matthew’s account (i.e., Mark 13:1-31; Luke 21:5-33); (b) it is imperative that the student know that immediately preceding this discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism, Jesus uttered two eschatologically (i.e., historical ending-points or turning-points) startling statements—condemning the Pharisees as “sons of hell” (Matt. 23:15) and pronouncing upon them “all the blood” of the righteous shed upon the earth (Matt. 23:31-35) would make most Jews think Jesus was talking about the end of the Jewish “world” (Pharisees were “keepers” of the Jewish culture and system)—and declaring the “house” of Judaism “desolate and forsaken” (Matt. 23:36-39) is terminology that Jeremiah and Ezekiel used to warn their contemporaries of the Babylonian captivity and destruction of the city and temple by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 19:8; Lam. 1:4; Ezek. Chs. 8-11); (c) it is imperative that the student know that right after the discussion of the widow’s mite offering into the Temple treasury (Lk. 21:1-4; Mk. 12:41-44), Jesus preached the alarming sermon on death and life Jn. 12:20-50. This sermon in John also, just before the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, contained startling statements such as, “Now is the judgment of this world, now is the ruler of this world cast out” (or as the Greek text would literally put it, nun krisis estin tou kosmou toutou, nun ho archon tou kosmou toutou eklethesetai exo, “Now is the crisis of this cosmos, now is the ruler of this cosmos thrown out.” The statement “...the crisis of the cosmos” in itself was enough to precipitate the questions of the apostles about the destruction of Judaism and Jerusalem. It seemed plain to the apostles that Jesus was predicting the destruction of the present Jewish order, involving the forsaking and desolation of the Temple and the nation—“NOW,” IN THAT GENERATION! Jewish scribes divided their eschatology into three eras: (1) Olam hazzeh—the order then existing; (2) Athid labho—the age to come after that existing order; and (3) Olam habba—the world to come. In some rabbinic traditions, the “age to come” and “the world to come” blended into one. The existing order was to be succeeded by the “days of the Messiah” which would stretch into the coming age and end with the “world to come.” According to the rabbis, the birth of the Messiah would be unknown by his contemporaries; he would appear, carry on his work, then disappear—probably for 45 days; reappear, destroy the hostile powers of the world (notably “Edom”—which symbolized Rome, the 4th and last world empire listed by the prophet Daniel). Israelites would be brought back to Palestine from all over the world through miraculous deliverance and, according to the Midrash, all circumcised Israelites would then be released from Gehenna, and the dead Jews raised (according to some by the Messiah). This resurrection would take place in Palestine so that those who had been buried elsewhere would have to roll underground—in great pain—until they reached the holy land of Palestine. In Athid labho, “the coming age,” the rabbis wrote that resistance to God and Israel would begin to intensify and a great battle of “Gog and Magog (Ezek. chs. 38-39) would end with

the victory of Israel over her enemies. Athod labho would blend right into Olam habbah, “the end of the age” which would usher in an era of holiness, forgiveness and peace. In this new age and circumstances, angels would cut gems 45 ft long and broad and place them in the city’s gates; the walls of the city would be of silver, gold and precious gems; precious jewels would be scattered all over the land which every Israelite was at liberty to take; Jerusalem would be as large as all Palestine and Palestine as large as all the world; wheat would grow as high as the mountains and the wind would convert the grain into flour and blow it into the valleys of the land; every woman was to bear a child, daily, so that ultimately every Israelite family would number as many as all Israel at the time of the Exodus; all sickness and disease would pass away; Israelites would not die; some Gentiles would live hundreds of years; the Messiah was to rule the world from Jerusalem which would be the capital of the world and take the place of Rome; the time of all this was among the seven things, according to the rabbis, unknown to man. After this “golden era” there would be a revival of the war of Gog and Magog; all enemies of Israel would be wiped off the face of the earth so that only Israel would remain; the final judgment by God and the heavenly Sanhedrin would commence in the valley of Jehoshaphat; all Jews but the perfectly righteous ones were kept in a form of “purgatory” then Gehenna would give up these less-righteous dead Jews who would be delivered to the bosom of Abraham; after this there would be a renewal of heaven and earth and the full implementation of Olam habba, “the world to come.” NOW YOU UNDERSTAND WHY THE APOSTLES WERE STARTLED AND BEGAN TO POINT, INCREDULOUSLY, AT THE HUGH STONES OF THE TEMPLE! Some of the great stones of Herod’s temple were, according to Josephus, 25 cubits long, 8 cubits high and 12 cubits wide. Using 18 inches to a cubit, one of these stones would be 38 X 12 X 18 ft. Eight large sized American autos could be stacked into those dimensions.

The apostles asked three questions which indicates how influential the rabbinic interpretations had been on them, and how confused they were trying to reconcile that with Jesus’ statements. (a) first question: “When will all this destruction be?” (Matt. 24:3a; Mk. 13:4a; Lk. 21:7a); (b) second question: “What will be the sign that You (Messiah) are coming?” (Matt. 24:3b; Mk. 13:4b; Lk. 21:7b); and (c) third question: “What will be the sign of the consummation of the age (Greek phrase is sunteleias tou aionos—note: aionos, “age” is singular)?” (Matt. 24:3c). Recognizing the dangers inherent in their confusion, Jesus sets out immediately to reveal a number of future events and to specify that they are not signs of the rabbinic theories coming to pass, NOR ARE THEY SIGNS OF THE “CONSUMMATION OF THE AGES (PLURAL).” At the end of his discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem Matt. 24:34-36; Mk. 13:30-32; Lk. 21:32-33, Jesus tells the disciples that THERE WILL BE NO SIGNS ahead of the end of the world and all the ages (plural). (We will study what Jesus said about his Second Coming in the next lesson). But for the immediate future of these apostles and other believers of their generation, Jesus gives some very practical instructions so they would not be led astray when the destruction of the Jewish system and holy city began. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish commonwealth would not take place for more than 30 years after Jesus died and was raised and ascended into heaven. It would begin in A.D. 66 and come to a climax in A.D. 70. The apostles have not yet understood that Jesus must “go away.” When he did return to his heavenly throne, they would long to have

him back (Lk. 17:22). Great persecutions were to come upon them. They must live in daily expectation and faith in his promises. They would be vulnerable to false expectations of a coming Messianic age as portrayed by the rabbis, because the circumstances preceding the destruction of Jerusalem were to be similar to rabbinic Messianic eschatology. So Jesus spoke his warnings.

YES! ALL THESE “SIGNS” DID, IN FACT, OCCUR BEFORE A.D. 70! Jesus predicted the following signs as those which would be preliminary signs of the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish nation: (a) Pseudo-Christ—he warned that “fake-Messiahs” would come shortly to proclaim the “new age” and there were many such imposters who deluded multitudes of the first century Jews into following them, claiming they would prove they were the Christ by exhibiting wonders and signs by the power of God (see Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, XX, VIII, 5) and they all came to a climax 62 years after the destruction of Jerusalem in the great rebellion against Rome under the false “Messiah” Bar-Kokhba, A.D. 132-135; (b) Social Crises—he warned of “wars and rumors of wars,”—between A.D. 30 and A.D. 66 the Roman empire suffered civil war among its emperors and army generals; recurring foreign invasion; rebellion of the Jews against Rome; riots in Alexandria, Egypt; a riot in Jamnia (western Judea) A.D. 39; riots by the Jews against Caligula’s attempt to put his statue in the Jewish temple; another riot in Alexandria in Claudius’ time; rioting in A.D. 48 when a Roman soldier exposed his genitals to the Passover crowds and hundreds of Jews were slain (Josephus, Antiquities XX, V, 3); continuing frontier disputes between Jews and Samaritans —according to Luke 21:9 Jesus said “...when you hear of wars and tumults (Greek word, akatastasia, means, “confusion, instability, riots”), do not be terrified for this must first take place, but the end (of Jerusalem) will not be at once.” WHY THE EXHORTATION AGAINST BEING ALARMED? Because Jesus is giving a very plain prediction of the holocaust coming upon Jerusalem and Judaism. But he has a work for these apostles to do in Jerusalem and Palestine which will take years to accomplish (Lk. 27:47; Acts 1:8). He does not want them to be terrified when wars and instability comes so that they will flee Jerusalem before the real holocaust comes; (c) Physiological Crises —“earthquakes and famines” one of these famines was recorded in the NT (Acts 11:29ff; see also Josephus Antiquities, XX, II, 5) about AD. 45-46; many destructive earthquakes recorded in the history of Syria and that territory beyond the Jordan is covered today with signs of violent earth-shocks in the past; the NT documents a great earthquake in Palestine at the death of Christ (Matt. 27:51-54)—one at Christ’s resurrection (Matt. 28:2); one at Philippi in Macedonia (Acts 16:26) and Josephus (Antiquities IV,V,2) mentions an earthquake in the reign of Herod “such as had not happened at any other time...” Roman historians document numerous earthquakes in the first century all over the Roman empire—in Apamea, Laodicea, Amporia, Asia, Achaia, Syria, Macedonia, Cyprus, Paphus, Crete and Italy. There is at least one pestilence mentioned by Josephus in Babylon AD. 40 which killed some 30,000 people (Antiq. XVII,IX,8) and one in AD 66 in Italy recorded by Tacitus; (d) Cosmic Upheavals or “great signs from the heavens (Lk. 21:11) and what Jesus meant were the catastrophies of nature such as volcanic eruptions, cyclones, meteorites or other great storms from the heavens (plural) which often terrify human beings—Josephus records the many such “signs” preceding the destruction of Jerusalem—a star resembling a sword

standing over the city; a comet that lasted a whole year; a bright light at the Feast of Unleavened Bread shining around the altar and the temple like broad daylight; the eastern gate of the temple requiring 20 men to shut, opened in the night of its own accord; a great noise of a multitude heard in the temple saying "Let us remove hence"; chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor seen running about among the clouds and surrounding of cities; 4 years before the war began, a son of Ananus came to the feast of Tabernacles, when the city was in peace and prosperity, and began to cry aloud, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house...."—while some of these are imaginary, no doubt, the very fact that Josephus recorded them indicates they were being rumored around AND THAT IS THE WHOLE POINT OF JESUS' WARNINGS HERE—TO KEEP HIS DISCIPLES FROM BEING TERRIFIED AT SUCH RUMORS! (e) Persecutions of Jesus' followers by the Jews, Jesus specifically states that severe persecutions to come upon his followers will NOT be signaling any imminent eschatological end of the world, then or ever! Immediately after the death of Jesus the tribulation of the disciples began—even this, however, should not cause them to expect the imminent destruction of the Jewish commonwealth or terrify them into fleeing Jerusalem and neglecting to fulfill their commission to preach the gospel there first. As a matter of fact, being brought before Jewish tribunals and rulers would be an opportune "time for them to bear testimony" (Lk. 21:13). When such begins Jesus promises they will be given what they should say. In other words, they would have a testimony of historical facts which none of their adversaries would be able to contradict. They need not be afraid they would have nothing to say and their sermons in the book of Acts indicates they preached the eye-witnessed facts as their primary message—they didn't go around constantly making predictions of the future! Jesus also warned there would be apostasy by many of the so-called "disciples" when all this persecution came and this is abundantly confirmed by both pagan historians as well as the NT (Gal. 1:7; 2:4; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 3:8-9; Titus 1:10-11; Jude; 2 Pet. 2: Rev. 1:3; Acts 15:1, etc.). The books of Acts and Hebrews documents thoroughly the persecution of Christians and apostasy and lawlessness of the Jews before A.D. 70.

Preaching of the gospel throughout the "world" of the first century, before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, is also an established fact. See Rom. 1:5,8; 10:18; 16:26; Col. 1:6; 1:23; according to the book of Acts on the Day of Pentecost peoples from every section of the known world of that day heard the gospel preached, Acts 2:5-11; according to the book of Revelation John saw saints from "all nations...tribes...peoples and tongues standing before the throne and before the Lamb (Rev. 7:9). It was the apostle Paul who made it abundantly clear in his epistle to the Hebrew-Christians that Judaism was doomed and "near to passing away" (Heb. 8:13; 10:25; 12:25-29; 13:14). And, so, very alarming words fell from the lips of Jesus. The apostles, combining with these words their undoubted knowledge of popular rabbinical traditions of the "coming age" were startled! Jesus wanted to allay their fears lest they be terrified into deserting their task. SO HE REVEALED TO THE APOSTLES THESE EVENTS OF HISTORY BEFORE THEY CAME TO PASS IN ORDER THAT THEY MIGHT TRUST HIM AND CARRY OUT THEIR JOB!

“The desolating sacrilege, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place, set up where it ought not to be” (Mark 13:14) IS THE ROMAN ARMIES SURROUNDING THE CITY OF JERUSALEM, ACCORDING TO THE PARALLEL PASSAGE IN LUKE 21:20! This fulfills Jesus’ parable of the Marriage Feast of the King for his Son, which was treated with contempt so the “King” sent His armies and burned their city and destroyed the people (Matt. 22:7). Moses predicted that this would happen should the Jews reject The Prophet (i.e., The Messiah) (Deut. 18:15-18; 28:15-68). Daniel predicted the desecration of the temple and the city by Roman armies 490 years after the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth in 457 B.C. as the consequence of the Jew’s rejecting their “Anointed Prince” (i.e., Messiah) (See Dan. 9:24-27). Jesus proclaimed the Jews would “fill up the measure of their fathers...that upon them would come all the righteous blood shed on earth” (Matt. 23:31-36) because they were going to kill the Son of God. Jesus used Daniel’s prophecy to illustrate that the terrible holocaust to come from the Romans in A.D. 66-70 would be similar to that holocaust upon the Jews in the days of Antiochus IV (Syrian emperor) in the days of the Maccabees (ca. 175-164 B.C.). The Jews overtly revolted against Roman taxation about A.D. 66. After an initial siege of Jerusalem in 66 A.D. by the Roman legate of Syria, Cestius Gallus, and subsequent withdrawal, the Roman emperor Nero sent his general, Vespasian, with 60,000 men (10 Legions) to Judea in the Spring of A.D. 67—he conquered all of Judea and was about to besiege Jerusalem, when he was called back to Rome after Nero’s suicide. Vespasian became emperor and sent his son, Titus Vespasian, to Judea to put down the Jewish revolt. Titus captured the temple area of Jerusalem in August, A.D. 70, and caused the daily sacrifices of the Jewish priests to cease (see Dan. 9:27). August 27th the temple gates were burned, August 29th (anniversary of the Babylonian destruction of Solomon’s temple in 487 B.C.), the Sanctuary itself was set on fire. While the sanctuary was burning, Roman soldiers brought their legionary standards (with the emperor’s image upon them) into the temple area and offered sacrifices to the emperor there! THUS, “THE DESOLATING SACRILEGE WHERE IT OUGHT NOT TO BE! September 26, A.D. 70, the whole city was in Titus’ hands. All during the siege and assaults on the city by the Romans, the Jews within had been reduced to such desperation there were atrocities the Jews perpetrated upon one another almost too horrible and gruesome to recount. Josephus documents it all in minute detail—read his “Wars of the Jews, Books IV, V, & VI. Jesus specifically and categorically states of this terrible holocaust, “...for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written” (Lk. 21:22)—this prophecy of Jesus has nothing to do with the Second Coming! Daniel predicted the “people of the prince who is to come” (i.e., the people of the “Anointed One”, the Messiah, the Jews) would destroy their own city (Dan. 9:26) AND ACCORDING TO JOSEPHUS’ ACCOUNT THIS LITERALLY HAPPENED—THE JEWS WREAKED AS MUCH, IF NOT MORE, DESTRUCTION ON JERUSALEM AND THEIR OWN PEOPLE THAN THE ROMANS! The Romans merely did the “mopping-up!

Matthew records Jesus saying, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days....” Matt. 24:29. Mark records, “But in those days, after that tribulation...” Mk. 13:24. Luke records, “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth, distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting with fear and with

foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” Lk. 21:25-26. All three say, “the powers of the heavens will be shaken...” This text IS a continuation of the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism: (a) “Immediately” does not usually make room for much of a time gap—certainly not a gap of over 2000 years! (b) “When these things begin to take place...” in Lk. 21:28 surely is not referring to the Second Coming because there will be NO signs pointing to its nearness—it will be instantaneous! (c) the further statement, “...this generation will not pass away till all these things take place (Matt. 24:34; Lk. 21:32; Mk. 13:30) undoubtedly includes the “sun and moon being darkened, stars falling from heaven, perplexity and distress of nations and the powers of the heavens being shaken.” Granted, this section is difficult for the Occidental (Western) mind, but not for the Oriental (Eastern). The careful Bible student will find much help in understanding this apocalyptic language of Jesus by giving attention to context and comparable passages from the Old Testament and from Biblical word usage. This section is plainly couched in what is called “apocalyptic” language, similar to that of the Old Testament Prophets and the book of Revelation when predicting the “coming” of God in judgment upon pagan nations (or the nation of Israel). Apocalyptic language is characterized by its figurative, symbolic and dramatic nature. “Sun, moon and stars darkened or falling from heaven” is often stated symbolically in the OT to picture any inexpressible calamity such as an overturning of kingdoms or cities or kings or religious potentates thought otherwise to be invincible. It is clear that Isa. 13:10; 14:12ff; 24:23; 34:1-4; Jer. 4:23-28; 15:9; Joel 2:10; 2:30—3:21; Amos 8:9; Micah 3:6; Hab. 3:11; and other such prophecies refer to the fall of kingdoms and kings in such terms. This kind of imagery goes back at least as far as Joseph and his brothers (Gen. 37:9ff). They understood it even then. “Distress of nations...” pictures the distress of the wicked as these calamities of the destruction of Jerusalem roll over them like waves of the sea (Isa. 57:20-21; Jer. 6:23ff). “Powers of the heavens being shaken” is a figurative way of predicting the “shaking down” of the system of Judaism and the obsolete priesthood (Heb. 8:13; 12:25-29; 13:13-14; Isa. 14:12ff; 24:21-23). The “sign of the Son of man” (as Luke puts it) fulfills Jesus’ plain prediction to these apostles that some of them would not taste death before they saw the kingdom of God come with power and see the Son of man coming in his kingdom (Mk. 9:1; Matt. 16:28). When Jerusalem was destroyed it was unmistakable evidence to Jesus’ followers that the Son of man had come to keep his word about taking the kingdom from the Jews and its (the church) indestructible (Mt. 16:18) establishment. “Men...fainting with fear...the tribes of the earth mourning...” Jews had been scattered all over the world ever since the Babylonian captivity. These “tribes” would certainly mourn and faint with fear when they learned of Jerusalem’s obliteration by the Romans, fearing the same treatment wherever they were in the dispersion (see Zech. 12:10; Jn. 19:37; Dan. 9:24-27). “The Son of man coming on clouds of heaven...” is a Messianic term used by Daniel (7:13-14) in connection with Christ’s first coming. This is undoubtedly what Jesus meant when he said the same thing to the High Priest warning him of the consequences of crucifying the Messiah (Matt. 26:64)—i.e., the destruction of Judaism. “Sending out his angels to gather the elect...” Luke says, “When these things begin to take place—your redemption is drawing near.” Luke does not say, “Your redemption is here—in the twinkling of an eye” so this cannot be the Second Coming and general resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15). What Jesus means is that when Judaism has fallen, the fruitless fig tree

(Judaism) will have been withered, and a great obstacle standing in the way of the gospel unto the whole world will be removed (Matt. 21:18-22; Mk. 11:12-14; Mk. 11:20-25). And from that time onward God will signally build up his kingdom. It shall be fully and exclusively established and recognized when the Jewish system comes to an end. This note of Luke 21:28, "...now when these things being to take place..." is parallel to his note in 21:31, "So also, when you see these things taking place..." and both of them refer to the visible destruction of Jerusalem. Isaiah predicted that God would create a new "land" or "nation" with "one stroke...in one day" before the old nation had passed away (Isa. 66:7-9). But Isaiah also predicted that this new nation (the church) would "go forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against me" (66:24). These prophecies, we believe, refer to the establishment of the "New Israel"—the church—on the day of Pentecost, and the subsequent destruction of the old order, Judaism.

Russell Boatman says in his book, *What The Bible Says About The End Time*, 1980, College Press, p. 259, "A budding tree, whatever its specie, is a sign that 'spring has sprung' and 'summer is nigh.' Thus He was telling His disciples that when they should see the things He had enumerated, they should know the fall of Jerusalem was at hand." The signs of Jerusalem's destruction and God's judgment of the Jewish establishment (the rulers included) will be as easily recognizable as the signs that summer is drawing near! When they see the preliminary signs and the immediate signs they were to know that Jesus, the Son of man, was near, indeed, at the very gates of Jerusalem for judgment. They were also to know that the kingdom of God was imminently and exclusively to be established in the church of Christ (Lk. 21:31). Paul wrote to the Hebrew-Christians to encourage them not to go back to Judaism (in the book of Hebrews), but to hold fast to Christianity, "and so much more as they were seeing the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). NOW WHAT DAY COULD JEWISH-CHRISTIANS SEE APPROACHING? The answer is, of course, the approaching destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism—certainly not the Second Coming of Christ (Matt. 24:36; Mk. 13:32, etc.). Their "redemption" (Lk. 21:28) would be the breaking of the stranglehold of Judaism from the throat of the infant church allowing it to survive the Judaizers. The phrase, "This generation shall not pass away till all these things take place" is recorded by ALL THREE gospel writers (Matt. 24:34; Mk. 13:30; Lk. 21:32) and extremely significant in interpreting this whole discourse! The first thing a careful student will do is compare the same usage of the word generation in Matt. 16:28; Mk. 9:1; Lk. 9:27; Matt. 11:16; 12:41; 23:35-36. "Generation" does NOT mean "race" as some have thought. It plainly means a life-span of some 35-40 years. "All these things...." refers back to all the tribulations predicted from Matt. 24:4 (and parallels) to Matt. 24:34. Notice the significant and continued use of "these" (contemporary things) all the way through the afore mentioned sections. But after Matt. 24:34 (and parallels), Jesus begins using "that." From Matt. 24:4 to Matt. 24:34 (and parallels), Jesus says everything that is to happen in those days (plural). Everything after Matt. 24:34 (and parallels) is "in that day" (singular). The phrase "that day" (singular) is a widely used phrase in the NT to speak of the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ. Lastly, the conjunction "But" in Matt. 24:36; Mk. 13:32; Lk. 21:34, is a definitive word separating that which has been predicted earlier and able to be known by signs, from that which follows the conjunction and cannot be known by signs.

The transitional statement between the destruction of Jerusalem and abrogation of Judaism to the Second Coming is: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away...” (Matt. 24:35; Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33). The apostles were shocked! What Jesus said about the destruction of Jerusalem/Judaism struck their hearts as if he had predicted the world was coming to an end. Indeed, the world of Judaism, which is what they primarily knew, was coming to an end! Then Jesus cautions them, and we paraphrase, “Indeed, the world IS GOING to come to an end, HOWEVER, the destruction of Jerusalem/Judaism IS NOT THE END OF THE WORLD. Meanwhile, the words I have just predicted of Jerusalem will not pass away—they will come to pass no matter how incredible they may sound to any Jew.” Be sure to study thoroughly the other major portions of scripture dealing with Christ’s 2nd Coming: (a) 1 Cor. 15:23-58 (dealing with the fact of the resurrection); (b) 1 Thess. 4:13—5:11 (to prove that there will be no “secret rapture” of some saints before others at the 2nd coming); (c) 2 Thess. 2:1-12 (predicting the destruction of the man of sin and of all men of sin at Christ’s 2nd coming); (d) 2 Pet. 3:1-13 (a warning against scoffing at the doctrine of the 2nd Coming); (e) and perhaps Revelation, chapters 20-11—22:21 only! Of course the 2nd Coming is mentioned numerous times in the NT but in more isolated portions. Christ is clear in the remainder of this discourse that NO ONE KNOWS WHEN THE CONSUMMATION OF THE ALL THE AGES IS TO ARRIVE. Jesus said it emphatically, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.” (Matt. 24:36). Here is how often Jesus reiterated the statement that NO ONE KNOWS THE TIME OR DATE OR SIGNS OF THE 2ND COMING: (these are all said at different moments during the discourse)

Matt. 24:36; Mk. 13:32 “...of that day and hour, no one knows...”

Matt. 24:37-39 “...as in the days of Noah...they did not know...”

Matt. 24:42 “...watch...for you do not know”

Mk. 13:35 “...watch...for you do not know”

Matt. 24:44 “...at an hour you do not expect...”

Matt. 24:50 “...when not expected...when not known....”

Matt. 25:13 “...you know neither the day nor the hour...”

Matt. 25:19 “...after a long time...”

Matt. 25:31 “...when (?) The son of man comes...”

The rest of the NT emphatically teaches that no one will know when Christ is to return and emphasizes his return will be “like a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:1-4; 2 Thess. 2:1-2; 2 Pet. 3:10). Now, a thief does not call up your home ahead of his visit to rob you and

say, "When you see me flash my headlights three times, you know I am coming to rob your house." The lesson we learn from the illustration about Noah and the flood IS THAT THERE WILL BE NO ABNORMAL, EXTRA-ORDINARY "SIGNS" POINTING TO A DEFINITE TIME FOR HIS RETURN. Christ's 2nd Coming will be just like the coming of the Flood in Noah's day. Life during Noah's time went along in its normal path—people married, built, ate and drank—it was "business as usual"—AND SUDDENLY, THE END! Those of Noah's day "did not know until the flood came" (Matt. 24:39). There were no preliminary "signs"—no gradual storm clouds gathering, no cosmic upheavals in localized places—IT ALL HAPPENED AT ONCE ALL OVER THE WORLD! Luke's parallel (Lk. 21:34-36 to Matt. 24:37-42) teaches that believers need to guard against being weighed down with dissipation (Greek kraipale, "headache, hangover, stupor") and drunkenness (Greek methe from which we get English, "methane"). When Jesus returns, a large portion of the world will be (just as it was in Jesus' day and has been to this day) in stupor from revelry. Believers also need to guard against being weighed down with the cares of this life (Greek merimnais biotikais, "divided mind" or "anxiety" about "biological" things). Many (just as always) will be so divided in their loyalty, they will not be ready to leave this world behind when Jesus comes. REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE! (Lk. 17:32). Luke says the "day (singular) will come suddenly like a snare (Greek pagis, "trap, snare, net, trick.") upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth."

THIS MOMENT, RIGHT NOW, would be "an hour men do not expect" Christ to return. A year, month, day and moment when everything is going along normally is a time when people would not expect Christ to return! Christ will no more make a prior announcement about his return than a thief would who comes in the night to rob a house (Matt. 24:43-44). JESUS IS GOING TO SURPRISE THE WHOLE WORLD (1 Thess. 5:1-11). There is absolutely no way to know ahead of time when the Lord is coming. Jesus could not be clearer than when he said, "...at an hour you do not expect." (Matt. 24:44,50). And he said this to believers (the disciples and all subsequent believers) who study his word and know it. How then can people expect to find in his word any indication of the time of his return! After his "journey" (Gr. exodon, "exodus" Lk. 9:31) from this earth back to heaven, the long passage of time before his return may make it appear he has "delayed" his return—but HE WILL RETURN JUST WHEN SOME THINK THAT HE WILL NOT! (Matt. 24:45-51). In other words, the Lord has purposely delayed his return! That does not mean, however, that it could not be at any moment. He had delayed in order to sift the true and faithful believers from those who are not. The true and faithful will not be lulled into unfaithfulness by the delay. They will believe him when he says, "expect me at every moment, don't think you can indulge yourselves for a while and then hope to anticipate my return by certain signs, ahead of time!" This is what the "wicked servant" hoped for—a signal or a prior announcement from his master that he was about to return. The "wicked servant" would then leave off self-indulgence and get ready for the return, but he fooled himself by speculating about the time of the master's return when the master had said nothing at all about the time of his return! THE PLETHORA OF SPECULATION WE HAVE TODAY ABOUT THE "TIME" OF CHRIST'S RETURN AND THE ALLEGED "SIGNS" OF IT IS DEBILITATING AND DANGEROUS TO THE CHURCH (read 1 and 2 Thessalonians).

The faithful and wise servant would be the one who “gives the household its food at the proper time and is found doing so when the master returns.” (Matt. 24:45-47). The faithful and wise servant is the one who WORKS and does what his master has assigned him constantly, accurately, the best he knows how, and is “watching” for the master’s return. He is like the wise virgins who were in constant preparation for the Bridegroom’s appearance! Every parable in this discourse teaches WATCHFULNESS. In view of the certainty of Christ’s return for redemption and judgment; in view of the certainty that no one knows when it will be; the proper preparation for it is to be CONSTANTLY WORKING FOR THE LORD! “Working” is equated with “watching”—they are the same thing! The Greek word translated “watch”—Matt. 24:42; Mk. 13:33,35,37; Lk. 21:36; Matt. 25:13 is *gregoreite*, from which we get the English proper name, Gregory) and *gregoreite* means, “be awake, be vigilant, be alert.” It means constant vigilance. The only person the thief cannot surprise is the one who stays awake all the time—never slumbers or dozes. ALL MUST WATCH, NOT JUST SOME! When the “man” went away on his journey (Mk. 13:32-37) and left his servants in charge, he left “each servant with his work.” God holds all human beings responsible to be doing his work when he comes back! The faithful and wise servant, secondly, does not let the “householder’s (i.e., Christ’s)” house be broken into (Matt. 24:43-44). The whole world is God’s house, all creation belongs to him. People should stay alert and vigilant and not let Satan invade what belongs to God. At least Christians, who know that the master can or should be expected at any moment, will be alert and watchful and faithful constantly. When he returns he will find his house (the Church) not invaded by the thief. The faithful and wise servant, thirdly, serves faithfully, correctly and constantly (Matt. 24:45-51). He does his job the best he knows to do it. He feeds the household (see Acts 20:28-32). He feeds it at the proper time. He does not speculate about the time of the Master’s return, but is faithful ONE DAY AT A TIME! When the Master finally comes back, the wise servant is found doing his job (which is not to try to speculate when the Master is going to return). Faithful service is watching for the Master’s.

The parable of the “talents” teaches that we must put our “talents” to work. It makes no difference what or how many “talents” we may have, we must put them to work for the Master. “Talents” in this parable does not necessarily mean “athletic, acting, speaking, musical, artistic” talents. The word “talents” is used in this parable to mean not only inherent capacities, but resources at our disposal! It means whatever we have! And however much or little we have of it! All people are endowed differently in God’s world. Some of what we are and have we cannot help or alter. But God will not demand that all people produce the same for him. Each person will be matched against his endowed abilities and opportunities. Every servant, however, MUST PRODUCE ACCORDING TO WHAT HE HAS—NOT ACCORDING TO WHAT HE DOES NOT HAVE! This parable definitely teaches that “watchfulness” does not allow for idleness! Each servant received something. Not a single servant was passed over. Each did not receive the same. Each was given an amount in keeping with what the Master deemed fitting. In the parable, those who received the 5 and the 2, went immediately to work. Their success did not come without effort on their part. They may have been tempted to waste or keep the master’s talents safe, but they didn’t—they gained because they labored. Do not forget, however, they would have gained nothing

if the Master had not given them everything they had to start with! The one who received only 1 talent failed (a) perhaps he was ashamed that he only had one...not wanting to do what appeared the least, he did nothing! Some are like that. If they can't do the largest, they won't do anything; (b) perhaps he did not have the courage to work. If a man is not willing to pay the price of hard labor in service to the Master, he will produce nothing; (c) most significantly, he did not trust his Master. He believed he would get a dishonest deal from his Master. Some people look upon God this way. Such a view of God is what stifles the productivity of many servants. God does not simply "order and demand." He loves and pities and extends his grace and mercy. God is not only just, fair and honest, he is gracious. When he gives us a task, he gives us the means, the motive and the power to do it—and then rewards us for doing it! **COULD IT BE THAT WE DON'T DO WHAT LITTLE WE CAN FOR THE LORD BECAUSE WE DON'T TRUST THE LORD TO BE FAIR AND GRACIOUS IN HIS JUDGMENTS? COULD IT BE THAT WE THINK THE LORD EXPECTS SOMETHING "BIG" AND "SPECTACULAR" OUT OF EVERYBODY, AND SINCE WE CAN'T DO THAT, WE WON'T DO ANYTHING? LOOK AT THE NEXT PARABLE!**

The parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Mat. 25:31-46) teaches that when Christ returns he will judge the world more on what it has given to others than on what it has professed to have been. **GIVE WHAT YOU HAVE—NOT WHAT YOU DON'T HAVE.** Help those in need—which is everyone in some area or another, either a physical or spiritual need. **HELPING PEOPLE IS SERVING CHRIST!** This is more than a parable—it is a realistic prophecy. Jesus makes this prophecy of his criterion of judgment because such is the final proof as to whether a person is really his disciple or not (see Jn. 13:35). On the judgment day it will be a question of how well our deepest feelings and our mouthed professions have been expressed by our positive actions toward others (James 1:22-27; 2:1-26; 1 Jn. 4:17-21). **JESUS PUTS THE PRINCIPLE OF "WORKING FOR HIM" BY "GIVING" WITHIN THE REACH OF EVERYONE!** Things done or given in this "parable" were simple things, helpful things, and everyone can do this. Too often we feel that what we can do is too little—so we do nothing at all. Yet what the "righteous servants" did in this account is what everyone of us can do. How important is ONE act of unexpected kindness—ONE word of comfort or "good news" to a man who does not have it? **ONLY ETERNITY WILL TELL!** Every cup of cold water given in Jesus' name will be considered faithful service by the Master. Notice that those who had done these simple things of goodness and mercy were absolutely unaware of their importance. They had done these things without being coerced, solicited, and without expecting any reward. Their kindnesses were spontaneous. Most remarkable, they did not realize they had been giving to Christ all along! They were startled to learn they had actually ministered to Christ. Every good deed from an unselfish motive is a ministry to God! This prophecy poses a situation every person needs to contemplate. Suppose Christ were on earth today—what would be our attitude toward him? Of course Christ is not here in flesh and blood—but his brothers are! Whatever we do for them, we do for him. God is the Father, all men are his children. Can we do good to God without doing good to his children? Love me, love my children. Love my children and you love me. Although this parable by itself does not mean that benevolence alone is sufficient to save a person—yet lack of benevolence is sufficient to condemn a person as unworthy of Christ.

WHAT WE REALLY WANT HERE IS WHAT WE WILL WANT IN HEAVEN WHEN JESUS RETURNS! WHAT WE REALLY ARE HERE IS WHAT WE WILL BE THERE. THAT IS THE WAY GOD HAS ORDERED IT TO BE!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

MATTHEW 26:1 – 28:20

Two days before the Passover was Tuesday, and Jesus predicted his crucifixion would be held on the Passover. Passover came on Thursday that particular year. Passover was always on the 14th of the Jewish month called Nisan. The Jewish calendar was a lunar (moon-phased) calendar; each month began with what is called “the new moon.” So the 14th of Nisan was always determined to be 14 days after the new moon. The first new moon after the vernal (Spring) equinox—an equinox (Latin, equi—equal, and nox—night) is something that happens twice a year when the sun crosses the equator at which time day and night are of equal length everywhere, i.e., vernal (Spring) about March 21 and autumnal about September 21. Passover time always came, generally speaking, in what we know as the month of April. There is always a full moon 14 days after the new moon, so Passover was always during a full-moon phase. The Hebrew word pesach, is translated “Passover,” and means literally, “to pass, to spring over, to spare” (Ex. 12:13-27). “Passover-day” was one day out of a festival of 7 or 8 days duration called in Hebrew, hag hammazzoth, i.e., “Feast of Unleavened Bread,” (see Lev. 23:4ff), from which modern matzah-bread comes. Passover came to be called, “The Feast of Unleavened Bread (see Mk. 14:1; Lk. 22:1). Jesus not only knew their murderous scheme to kill him, but he knew exactly which day they would do it. At the very moment Jesus was predicting it would be at Passover (see Jn. 13:1), the rulers were vowing they would not do it at Passover, “lest there be a tumult among the people.” Most assuredly the Son of man was in charge of the whole situation. Nothing in God’s plan comes about accidentally. Men may scheme, but the Son does not have his life taken from him—he lays it down (Jn. 10:17-18). Man wills and God works—but God is Sovereign. Redemption will be by vicarious atonement, not by self-righteous human works. If self-righteous men try to thwart God’s way, he will use their evil to fulfill his way! God did not force these wicked men to kill Jesus on Passover—they chose to do it and they found a way to do it “secretly” (Lk. 22:6) because Judas ran and told them they could arrest Jesus out in the Garden of Gethsemane when he knew that was where Jesus was going. But God did show by Jesus’ omniscient foreknowledge that wickedness could not stop his program. God had control and would use their wickedness to make Jesus become the whole world’s Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7).

Because of the spiritual symbolism of the Passover! As Jesus and his apostles were eating the Passover meal, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke it and gave to his disciples, saying, “Take, eat; this is my body” (note: he did not say, “broken for you”.... “not a bone of him shall be broken” Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12). Then he took a cup, and when he had “given thanks” (Greek, eucharistesas, from which we get, “Eucharist.”) he said, “Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” These two elements—right out of the Passover itself—symbolize LIFE (i.e., “flesh and blood”). Their symbolic significance would not be lost on these Jewish apostles. Unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine are two elements which may be obtained in every

land, in some form or another, and are about as universal as anything Jesus could have used. The apostle Paul tells us that Jesus said, "Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:25). Jesus did not, when he instituted it, say how often! However, divine history of the early church (Acts 20:7) indicates the first century church observed this memorial each first day of the week, with apostolic approval. Also, writings of the earliest church leaders after the apostles (e.g., Justin Martyr, A.D. 150, et. al.) indicate it was observed every first day of the week. It would certainly seem reasonable that every time a local congregation of Christians meets as a whole body for worshiping the Lord they would want to observe the Lord's Supper. The purpose of the Supper is clearly spelled out in 1 Corinthians ch. 11 (a) to memorialize Christ's redemptive work; (b) to testify to his Second Coming; (c) to examine one's own life in light of the above two things; (d) and to diligently keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The Lord's Supper is not a "means of grace." ONLY THE DEATH OF CHRIST IS MAN'S MEANS OF GRACE. Christians observe the Supper as an expression of their faith which gives them access to the grace of God (Rom. 5:2) and appropriates for them the death of Christ in their place. Christians express their love through the Supper because it is what Jesus wanted them to do in remembrance of him. Deliberate refusal to observe it would result in sin because that would be faithlessness and hatred for Christ. Some people want to make the Lord's Supper a sacrament—a literal means of obtaining the grace of God. One form of such literalism is called, transubstantiation (Roman Catholic); another form is called consubstantiation (Lutheran). In both instances the "bread and the wine" literally (miraculously) become the flesh and blood of Jesus. But (a) when Jesus instituted the Supper his physical flesh and blood were still intact in his physical body so none of the apostles literally partook of his body and blood that night; (b) even if one could literally eat his flesh and drink his blood it would be of no profit (see John 6:63); (c) and which bread and wine are actually his flesh and blood?—if the emphasis is put on "This is my body...and this is my blood..." then the very bread and wine which the apostles consumed would be the only body and blood of Jesus and consumed 2000 years ago; (d) and finally, Jesus used other things in a "representative" way and never intended them to be taken literally: "I am the Vine...I am the door....I am the Good Shepherd..., etc." It is faith in the heart of the believer expressing itself in obedient love that makes the bread and wine significant—not the ceremony, not the elements, and not even the statement, alone of Christ. If efficaciousness be in the ceremony, elements, or even in the statement alone of Christ, without the faith of the believer, then the Supper provides efficacy for anyone (including hypocrites) who merely partakes.

The words of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane form one of the greatest moments in all of history and in all the Bible! There are only five other moments in history equal to it (a) Creation; (b) Christ's Birth; (c) Christ's Crucifixion; (d) Christ's Resurrection; (e) Christ's Second Coming. The whole redemptive plan of God from Genesis to Revelation was hanging in the balance at that moment. Jesus knew all along he was sent to die an atoning death on the cross. He predicted it many times himself. Yet all the black, horrid weight of sin upon his immaculate soul gripped him with reality here in the Garden as at no other time! Jesus grew in wisdom, stature and favor with God and man—he was human. The impact of the cross apparently was something that came upon him in graduating intensity until it burst

upon him in the Garden like a personal holocaust. This does not detract from his perfection—it only glorifies it! But in his willing assumption of the limitations of the flesh he did not come to full realization of the mortifying, oppressive harshness of it until he had to make this ultimate decision. It was no more wrong for the human Jesus to cry for release from his cross than for the human Paul to cry for release from his “thorn.” God’s grace was sufficient for both of them—AND FOR US! It was predicted that the Messiah would be distressed and troubled (Isa. 40:1ff; 50:4-9), but victorious over his discouragement by simply committing his cause to Jehovah. In his agony Jesus did NOT distrust the Father or rebel against him. He cried out in anguish, “Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.” The Perfect Man’s struggle is on record. God bares it for all men to see and have faith. Suppose the Incarnate Son of man had simply said nothing but had, with stoic imperviousness, without a struggle, gone to the cross, merrily, singing and smiling all the way? What help would that have been to fleshly mortals? Either we would doubt his sincerity or scoff at the idea of his telling us how costly it is to do God’s will. Or he would appear as a divine being and nothing in the human circumstance could ever touch or bother him. We might be awed by his stoicism and strength, but we would have difficulty believing he could understand our weaknesses and frailties. There are times when all human beings do not want to do the will of God. Does Jesus understand that? Yes! Jesus did not want to go to the cross. It was there God would make him who knew no sin, to become sin on our behalf” (2 Cor. 5:21). He did not deserve to be punished for anyone’s sin. Justice (law) would demand every sinner die for his own sin (Ezek. 18:5-24; Rom. 3:10ff). But Jesus was sent to the world in human form to conquer sin in the flesh, then to die a vicarious death on man’s behalf. That death would be not merely physical, but would be the “second death”----separation from God! Here we see Man in Jesus as God intended man to be when he created man. Man choosing the will of God above the greatest temptation to selfishness that could be thrown against man. By all that is fair, and meritorious, Jesus could have said, “It is not My cup to drink; I have done nothing that I deserve this!” There was no reason for him to die—there was no justification for it. The question Jesus must settle, once for all, was, did he love man enough to do this in spite of how he felt about it or how unjust it was? YES! HE DID LOVE MAN ENOUGH! He did not settle this question, however, before he cried loudly with tears and sweat as if it were great drops of blood. Literally the text in Luke 22:44 reads, kai genomenos en agonia ektenesteron proseucheto kai egeneto ho hydros autou hose thromboi aimatos katabainontos eip ten gen—in English, “And having become intensely in agony, and praying, the sweat of him became like clots of blood dropping upon the earth.” R. C. Foster wrote, “The word translated ‘great drops of blood’ can be rendered ‘blood clots’ (i.e., thromboi aimatos). It seems to mean more than that his drops of sweat resembled drops of blood by their size and frequency; otherwise there would be no reason or force in such a comparison. ‘Bloody sweat’ is a good translation. Plummer cites the case of Charles IX of France as reported by Stroud, *The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ* (Plummer’s Commentary on Luke, p. 511): ‘During the last two weeks of his life (may 1754) his constitution made strong efforts...blood gushed from all the outlets of his body, even from the pores of his skin; so that on one occasion he was found bathed in a bloody sweat.’ Even if no such phenomenon were known today, it would not prove that such did not occur in the case of Jesus. His agony was unique. The nobler the person, the more sensitive he is to suffering of this type.” After

his agony Jesus arose from the ground, and sought the solace of his apostles. They had so confidently vowed they would stand with him even if it demanded their death. BUT WHEN JESUS CAME TO WHERE THEY HAD BEEN STATIONED, HE FOUND THEM ASLEEP. It seems incredible that in spite of Jesus' "loud crying" (Heb. 5:7-9), and his sweating blood, that the apostles—only a stone's throw away—could go to sleep! JESUS WARNED THEM THAT THIS WAS PROOF THAT THEY WERE NOT AS CAPABLE AS THEY HAD BRAGGED—"THE SPIRIT IS WILLING, BUT THE FLESH IS WEAK." A GREAT LESSON FOR US TO LEARN! LET US ADMIT WHAT JESUS SAYS IS TRUE AND NOT BE SO OVERCONFIDENT IN THE FLESH! LET US FOLLOW THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT IN THE SPIRIT'S WORD FOR THAT IS THE ONLY CLAIM WE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO STAND IN GOD'S WILL, CERTAINLY NOT IN OUR OWN POWER OR MERIT! When it came to the ultimate agony of the Son of Man, the hour when he must overcome the flesh by the Spirit, for them, they could only brag about what they were capable of doing for him—then they fall asleep! TAKE HEED, CHRISTIAN, APART FROM ABIDING IN HIM, YOU CAN DO NOTHING, Jn. 15:1-11!

There are many illegalities or violations of Jewish, Roman and "common" law in Jesus' arrest and trial: (a) he was arrested without an officially written out warrant, by a mob, and on a feast day; (b) he was taken before someone (Annas) who had no official standing, interrogated, abused and not released when he himself called for evidence and witnesses and none were brought; (c) he was taken before an illegal gathering of Jewish officials (at night which was illegal), having never been officially accused, and having no witnesses to accuse him—this "kangaroo court" had already determined his sentence along with his guilt; (d) false witnesses were bribed to make false statements; (e) their testimony did not agree; (f) he was adjured to testify against himself; (g) all the evidence and claims he made in his own behalf were never allowed into the proceedings; (h) he was allegedly arrested for one charge, and, when brought before the illegal meeting of the council, was condemned for another charge; (i) he was abused, mocked, reviled and physically assaulted in the presence of civil officials supposed to uphold law and order and the humane treatment of defendants; (j) finally, he was brought before the Jewish council, convened on a Friday and given a guilty sentence, which was contrary to legal practice of this council. THERE WAS NO CASE! BY THE VERY NORMS OF JURISPRUDENCE, JESUS SHOULD HAVE BEEN RELEASED! NOTWITHSTANDING THE FACT THAT HE WAS INNOCENT! Truth was assaulted and despised that night—it continues to be so today. Truth has to be loved and stood for when it is put on trial—JESUS DID! Honesty and justice is something that has to be cared about if men are going to know God's redemptive message. Jesus was not the victim of a miscarriage of justice—THERE WAS NO JUSTICE AT ALL IN HIS "TRIALS"! Wickedness, evil, falsehood and everything that exalts itself against God was what condemned Jesus, because he was TRUTH, in PERSON. He was God in the flesh. Though men pretended to a false righteousness by saying that God could not become flesh—still they knew that was the very thing happening before their eyes (see Jn. 3:19-21). THAT IS WHY THEY SENTENCED HIM TO DEATH! THEY DID NOT WANT TRUTH, IN PERSON, IN THEIR WAY, IN THEIR MIDST, "IN THEIR FACE," DEMANDING THEIR ALLEGIANCE. "Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth has fallen in the public squares, and

uprightness cannot enter” (Isa. 59:14, RSV).

Pilate was the consummate relativistic, pragmatic, weak-kneed, self-serving, politician! He “married well” by marrying Claudia Procula, granddaughter of Octavian (Caesar Augustus). He made friends (i.e., prince Germanicus) in high places. He worked his way up the political ladder by being a “yes-man” to every superior he had. He used and abused the Jews over whom he was placed to administer and rule. He taxed them severely to support his administration and army, he practiced the tyranny of “eminent-domain” commandeering private property for Roman purposes, and he humiliated and agitated the Jews by profaning what his Jewish subjects held sacred! It is evident he knew how to play the game of “gotcha-politics” when he sent Jesus to stand trial before Herod Antipas (because Jesus was a “Galilean” and Herod was Tetrarch of Galilee). Pilate thought by “stroking” Herod he could disengage himself from a controversial “hot-potato” issue. Pilate was a superstitious, heathen underling of the “great” Tiberius Caesar. Eight different times Pilate pronounced that Jesus was INNOCENT of any crime worthy of crucifixion by the Roman government. (a) John 18:38, before he sent Jesus to Herod; (b) Lk. 23:15 immediately after Jesus’ return from Herod; (c) Lk. 23:20 again he tried to release Jesus; (d) Lk. 23:22 Pilate said again he found no crime in Jesus, and offered to “chastise” him and release him; (e) Jn. 19:4 after Pilate had scourged Jesus; (f) Jn. 19:6 when Pilate said, “Take him yourselves and crucify him, I find no crime in him”; (g) Jn. 19:12 after Jesus warned Pilate of his sin, Pilate again sought to release him; (h) Matt. 27:24 Pilate tried to convince himself he had released Jesus and was free of the criminal actions of the Jews; (i) Lk. 23:15 Pilate also insisted that Herod found Jesus not guilty of any of the charges of the Jews. When the Jewish religious rulers who had brought Jesus to Pilate cried out, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend; everyone who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar” Jn. 19:12 it became Pilate’s punctum de veritas (“moment of truth”)...”Then he handed him over to them to be crucified” (Jn. 19:16). This is evidence beyond any doubt that Pilate was a pragmatic (“whatever works for me”) moral coward! Pilate knew that if the Jews reported this confrontation to Tiberius Caesar, and he freed Jesus from their scheme, he, Pilate, would be summarily executed! SO HE CAVED-IN BY SACRIFICING WHAT HE KNEW IN HIS CONSCIENCE TO BE RIGHT IN ORDER TO SAVE HIS OWN NECK! INDEED, THERE ARE MANY “PILATES” IN MODERN JURISPRUDENCE AND POLITICS (NOT ONLY IN AMERICA, BUT AROUND THE WORLD). There are, of course, a few honest, morally-upright, and courageous politicians and judges here and there. But as George Washington pointed out long ago in America, there would be FEW people in politics who would be able, in the face of a temptation to compromise for personal gain, to have the moral integrity to keep their promises, stand for what is right and true, and be righteous in their personal lives. MAY GOD GIVE CHRISTIANS THE COURAGE TO GET OUT IN MASSES AND ELECT SUCH PEOPLE TO PLACES OF POLITICAL POWER EVERYWHERE IT IS POSSIBLE!

God actually, literally, forsook, abandoned, renounced, and left Jesus at one point on the cross as the ultimate sinner. While it cannot be explained or understood with human reason, it must be believed or the “gospel” is a hoax and not “good news.” Eli, Eli, lama sa-

bach-thani? That is Aramaic, not Hebrew (i.e., a Semitic lingua franca or “common language” among Middle East people of that day). It was the fourth utterance of Jesus upon the cross. Translated into English it means, “My God, My God, Why have You forsaken me?” This is the agonized cry of God-Incarnate Himself on the cross identifying Himself and participating with the issue of human sin. “God interposed himself with an oath” (Heb. 6:17) on the cross and went there in man’s place. It is God-Man entering into the experience of both at the point where reconciliation must be achieved. It is the Incarnate God becoming his own curse upon sin and sinners (Gal. 3:13). It is “Him who knew no sin, being made to be sin on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:21). It is God being both Just and the Justifier of believers (Rom. 3:26). It is the cry of a human soul at the uttermost of sin where man is separated from his Creator. It is the cry of the agony of absolute estrangement from God and all its consequences. It is the cry of a human soul at the uttermost of sorrow—sorrowing over its loss of identity because it has been forsaken by God, the soul lost for eternity! It was all the cries of all the doubts of all humanity at the seeming injustices and incongruities of life and death. “My God, WHY?...” Is there an answer? YES! Calvary raises the questions—Easter morning gives the answers! GOD HAS NOT FORSAKEN MAN! On the cross, Jesus actually experienced the “second death” for all mankind—if only all mankind would appropriate his vicarious experience by surrendering to him their lives in faith and obedience!

Matthew 27:50 merely says Jesus cried again with a loud voice and “yielded up” his spirit. Luke alone records the last words spoken by Jesus on the cross----“Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit” (Lk. 23:46). Luke used the Greek verb *paratithemai*, means, “deposit, entrust, commit” (2 Tim. 2:12). Matthew used the Greek word *apheken*, which means Jesus “released, dismissed or yielded up” or “let go” his spirit. Jesus finished his work in the earthly body given him (Heb. 10:5-10), dismissed his spirit, and deposited it with the Father for safe-keeping! Jesus was in control all the way. He did not release his spirit until “it was finished.” He could have held on any amount of time he wished. No one took his life—he laid it down and took it up again. And the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). It was torn from “top to bottom” indicating that no human hand had done the rending! The tearing of the temple veil was not caused by the earthquake because that happened after the veil was rent. This veil was 60 feet long (six stories), 30 feet wide, the thickness of the palm of a man’s hand, i.e., about 4-5 inches thick. It was a composite of 72 equal squares of material and took scores of priests to manipulate. Rabbinical literature tells of two veils in Herod’s Temple, one before the doors into the Holy Place, and one before the entrance to the Holy of Holies. The one torn in two was undoubtedly the veil before the Holy of Holies. Hebrews 9:1-28 is clearly a reference to this historic event as symbolizing the spiritual reality that was accomplished at the death of Christ—i.e. the way into the real Holy of Holies was finally opened, not just the typical one. This miracle, witnessed no doubt by many priests (3:00 p.m.), may be part of the reason many priests became followers of Christ later (see Acts 6:7).

John (Jn. 19:31-37) joins with Matthew (Matt. 27:57-66) and the two make an historical record of details in a greater amount and specifics than the burial of any other ancient—famous or infamous! John (Jn. 19:42) notes that it was “the day of Preparation”

(Greek, ekei oun dia ten paraskeuen ton ioudaion, “So, because of the preparation of the Jews”). Mark 15:42 expressly says “Preparation” was the day before the Sabbath. Thus, it was late on that Friday evening that Jesus was buried because the Jews had already asked Pilate to speed up the death of these three on Calvary (Jn. 19:31-37) lest their bodies be hanging there on Sabbath (sundown on Friday). The Romans employed a very grim method of hastening execution by crucifixion—they smashed the legs of the victim with an iron hammer. This kept the victim from being able to support himself so his body sagged and cut off his breathing and he suffocated. The utter shock of such treatment also precipitated quickening of death. John, an eyewitness to the whole day’s events, swears as an eyewitness that Jesus was dead when taken off the cross. (John 19:35). This is very important. John notes that the soldiers did not break the legs of Jesus because he was already dead. So the soldiers bore witness that Jesus was dead. One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear (Jn. 19:34) and at once blood and water flowed out. That indicated internal bleeding had been taking place. Also indicated the pericardium (the sac surrounding the heart protecting it from injury) had been slit open which would cause instant death. We emphasize the certainty of Jesus’ death because if he did not really die, he was not really raised from the dead! In fact, that is what Hugh Schonfield’s celebrated book, *The Passover Plot*, pretends—Schonfield alleges that Jesus plotted to have himself drugged on the cross, appearing to be dead, and then get out of the tomb, appear to his disciples, convince them he had risen from the dead, then go off and die somewhere and his burial place would never be known. What utter nonsense in the light of 2000 years of verifying of the Gospels as authentic history beyond a reasonable doubt! The Holy Spirit, guiding the writers of the Gospels, knew ahead of time that books like Schonfield’s would clutter up the succeeding centuries of religious literature like a garbage pile.

Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, and Nicodemus (two members of the Jewish council) put the dead body of Jesus in Joseph’s rock-hewn (expensive) tomb (see Isa. 53:9) and rolled a stone against the door (Matt. 27:59ff; Mk. 15:46ff, Lk. 23:50ff, and Jn.19:38ff). Just down the slope from “Gordon’s” Calvary is a garden. At the north end is a rock wall with an opening. One must stoop to enter. There is a runway there where a large round stone might be moved back and forth. Within the opening is a room, 9 or 10 feet square. There is a ledge on the east side of the room just large enough to hold a human body for burial. Many scholars believe this is the actual tomb of Joseph where Jesus’ body was interred. It does seem to fit every specification of the scriptural account. Note the following: (a) Jesus was buried in a tomb no one else occupied ever before; (b) 100 litras (80 lbs. U.S.) of burial spices were used (expensive); (c) there was no time for hired mourners or the other customary rites of Jewish burial at the home; (d) the body was wrapped limb by limb with spices sprinkled profusely upon each bandage; (e) the body was not carried on a bier to the grave as was customary; (f) everything was hurried and without ceremony; (g) it was in a rich man’s tomb—usually those “crucified” were criminals and counted unworthy of burial and their bodies were most often thrown into the Jerusalem “garbage dump” (Gehenna) and allowed to be burned up with the other garbage; (h) his body did not see corruption (decay) according to Psa. 16:10 and Acts 2:27). The women (mentioned in Matt. 27:55-56) merely followed Joseph and Nicodemus to the tomb: (a) because it was late Friday evening, and the

Sabbath began at sun-down—the authorities would have arrested them if they were found traveling or doing anything on the Sabbath; (b) they were determined to know with certainty where the tomb was so they might find it the first day of the week when they would return and anoint his dead body for burial; (c) Luke says, “...they saw the tomb, and how his body was laid...” Lk. 23:55. THIS IS SIGNIFICANT! There have been many theories of unbelievers attempting to explain away the testimony of the empty tomb (attempts actually to disprove the bodily resurrection of Jesus). One of those theories is that the women got lost on their return to the garden, after Sabbath, and came to a tomb which was empty, but it was not the tomb where Jesus had been buried. But the Gospel records would dictate that if they went to the wrong tomb: (a) the angels were in the wrong tomb; (b) all they had to do was find Joseph and ask him where the right one was; (c) they would have known it was the wrong one because the right one had Roman soldiers guarding it and there would have been evidence of their having been there; (d) they were certainly not very observant for having gone to the right one earlier and taking note of all the details of “how he was laid” and just a few hours later (not days) getting lost. The theory is much more ridiculous than the probability!

First appearance, (Jn. 20:11-17), Sunday morning, all the women except Mary Magdalene (who had gone to tell Peter and John that the tomb was empty); Second appearance, (Matt. 28:9-10; Lk. 24:9-11; Mk. 16:10-11; Jn. 20:18), Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene caught up with the group of women as they were returning to the city and Jesus appeared to the whole group of women (Lk. 24:10); Third appearance, (1 Cor. 15:5), sometime on Sunday, precise time unknown, to Peter alone somewhere in Jerusalem—the 2 disciples on the way to Emmaus mention this as having already happened (Lk. 24:28-35) when Jesus walks with them; Fourth appearance, Sunday afternoon (“...that very day...” Mk. 16:12; Lk. 24:13-35), to the two disciples (not apostles) on the road to Emmaus; Fifth appearance, (Jn. 20:19-20; Mk. 16:13-14; Lk. 24:26-43), Sunday evening, late, to the apostles and disciples in Jerusalem, Thomas absent—the 2 disciples to whom Jesus appeared on the road to Emmaus reported to the gathered apostles that the Lord had risen and appeared to Simon (Lk. 24:34) and the Greek word translated “appeared” is *ophthe*, is derived from *horao* and *ophthalmos*, and means to see something with the eyes as opposed to a “vision” or a “phantasy.” It is very important to note in this appearance, Jesus offers proof to three of the sensory receptors of man—sight, hearing, touch. This is scientific evidence; it is what is called by scientists, “empirical evidence.” The apostles appeal to this empirical evidence later as the very center of their gospel proclamation (Acts 10:41; 1 Cor. 15:1-11; 1 Jn. 1:1-4), they ate with him! Sixth appearance, one week later, Sunday (Jn. 20:26-29), to the apostles again in Jerusalem, Thomas present—Thomas was invited to touch the nail prints—Thomas was convinced. The only way to call this an hallucination is to call John a liar. The Gospel account plainly states it as an empirical event. Seventh appearance, (Jn. 21:1-25) some time later—time unknown—to seven of the apostles while they were fishing, they ate breakfast together. Eighth appearance, (Matt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:15-18) still later—time unknown—to the eleven apostles on a mountain in Galilee and the Great Commission. Ninth appearance, (1 Cor. 15:6) still later—time unknown—to over 500 brethren at once in a place unknown, but testified to by the apostle Paul—many of those who

saw him here were still alive when Paul wrote First Corinthians, Spring A.D. 57. Tenth appearance, (1 Cor. 15:7), still later—time unknown—at Jerusalem to James, probably Jesus' half-brother—the leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15). Eleventh appearance, (Lk. 24:44-49), to the apostles—unknown time—reminding them that he is the fulfillment of the redemptive plan of God proclaimed in the entire OT—after which Jesus led them out to the Mount of Olives and ascended up into heaven out of their sight (Acts 1:3-11). Twelfth appearance, (Acts 9:1ff), to Saul of Tarsus, later called the apostle Paul, on the road to Damascus. These appearances are evidence of the first nature: (a) they appeal to sight, touch, hearing; (b) they occurred to hundreds of people, some of whom were alive as late as AD. 57, 27 years after the event; (c) those to whom they occurred were not gullible, credulous, superstitious people; (d) those to whom he appeared went right back into the city which had crucified and buried him and testified to his resurrection—if there had been any way to present evidence (e.g., Jesus' dead body) to deny the empty tomb and their testimony, we may be assured such evidence would have been brought forth—BUT NONE WAS; (e) one of his appearances was to one of his most inveterate enemies—Saul of Tarsus.

The enemies of Christ did everything humanly possible to prevent any circumstances which would remove the body of Jesus from Joseph's tomb (Matt. 27:62-66). They posted a company of soldiers, armed, to keep it from being tampered with. The official seal of Pontus Pilate, procurator, was placed upon the tomb-door (huge rock) to make it impossible for the stone to be rolled away without someone knowing it. But the stone was rolled away! The body of Jesus was missing! Angels of the Lord (two of them, actually) were there, an earthquake shook the land, and the guards "trembled for fear of him" (the angel). THE GUARDS SAW THE ANGEL, according to Matthew, they weren't afraid of the earthquake—they had seen many of those. But what did they report to their superiors? Did they lie? NO! "...the guard went into the city (some of them—the others must have stayed there at the empty tomb) and told the chief priests all that had taken place." THAT WOULD INCLUDE SEEING THE ANGEL AND SEEING THAT THE TOMB WAS EMPTY. Immediately, the Jewish authorities "cook up" THE BIG LIE! After calling the council together, they gave the soldiers a sum of money and told the soldiers to say, "His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep." HOW CAN THE TESTIMONY OF THE GUARDS BE BELIEVED? THEY ARE TO SAY JESUS' BODY WAS STOLEN WHILE THEY WERE ASLEEP. IF THEY WERE ASLEEP, HOW DO THEY KNOW HOW THE BODY WAS STOLEN? Would you accept the testimony of a witness against you in court who said he knew you were guilty because you committed the crime in his presence while he was asleep? Some critics of the Bible say Christians made up this story about the chief priests to help certify their claims that Jesus was raised from the dead. THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW WAS WRITTEN AROUND A.D. 50-60, THERE WERE STILL PLENTY OF CHRIST-HATING JEWS ALIVE WHEN IT WOULD BE CIRCULATING—WHY ISN'T THERE SOME RECORD OF A DENIAL OF THIS LIE? WHY DIDN'T THEY PRODUCE THE DEAD BODY OF JESUS WHEN MATTHEW WROTE HIS GOSPEL AND STOP THE TESTIMONY OF THE RESURRECTION WITH EVIDENCE? BECAUSE THEY HAD NO EVIDENCE TO DISPUTE MATTHEW'S GOSPEL!

Jesus, in the Great Commission, claims universal, absolute sovereignty! “All authority has been given to him, in heaven and on earth.” Christianity is absolute. It is not provincial. It is cosmic—it is the only authority accepted in heaven as well as on earth. There is no other acceptable access to heaven or God except in the religion of Christ (not Buddhism, not Hinduism, not Islam, not Judaism—nor any other “ism.”). Jesus and his teachings through the writings of the apostles have supreme authority—it extends to all creation, seen and unseen, physical and supernatural (Col. 2:25; Phil. 2:9-11, etc.). It makes no difference what other religions say; it makes no difference what powerful men or what the devil may do—WHAT THE WORD OF CHRIST SAYS IS AUTHORITATIVE AND WILL BE FULFILLED! Whatever history means, it must agree with the New Testament; whatever science means, it must agree with the NT; whatever feelings mean, they must agree with the NT. Some Greek scholars (Donald Nash, et al), say the command to evangelize is not in the word “Go” (poreuthentes), which they say is a “circumstantial participle, showing an attending circumstance to making disciples.” Other scholars say the participle is in the imperative mood which would make it a “command.” However, the Greek word matheteusate, “make disciples” is unquestionably in the imperative mood, so the Great Commission is a COMMAND from Christ. What Jesus commanded here, “make disciples,” must be interpreted in the light of how the apostles and other Christians did it as they fulfilled his command. First, the Gospel must be preached (Rom. 10:14-17); people must repent (Acts 2:38), and confess or profess the name of Christ as Savior (Acts 4:12); and they must be immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 16:33; 18:8; 22:16; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-27; Eph. 4:5, etc.). This command to go and make disciples is to be obeyed by every disciple of Jesus. Jesus told the apostles that they should teach every disciple they made to “observe all that I have commanded you (apostles)” so the Great Commission is a perpetual commandment for all disciples of Jesus so long as this world remains!

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

