

DICKSON TEACHER'S BIBLE COMMENTARY

MATTHEW

WRITER

The name Matthew means “gift of God.” Matthew, a Christ-sent apostle and the son of Alphaeus, was, before his personal calling by Jesus, formerly known as Levi (Mk 2:14). He has been commonly accepted as the writer of this inspired document concerning the ministry of Jesus (9:9-13; 10:3). He was formerly a tax collector in Capernaum before being called by Jesus to apostleship (9:9; Lk 5:27,28; see At 1:13).

DATE

Though the letter was written before A.D. 70 and the destruction of Jerusalem, it is difficult to determine the date of writing. Some Bible students have affirmed that the letter was written as early as A.D. 38. If this is true, then this would have been the first inspired written record of the ministry of Jesus, if not the first letter of the New Testament canon. Some Bible students, however, have affirmed that the date of writing was closer to the period between A.D. 58 to A.D. 60. The more probable date of writing is around A.D. 60 and after both Mark and Luke recorded their inspired documents of the life and ministry of Jesus.

Matthew – Introduction

THEME

Matthew begins the letter by saying, “*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*” (1:1). He builds on this theme in recording events and teachings in the ministry of Jesus that bring our understanding of who Jesus was according to the same confession of Peter in 16:16: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (See 16:13-19). Not only did Jesus bring His immediate disciples to this confession during His ministry, Matthew also brings his readers to acknowledge the same of Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ (Messiah), the One who fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah, who was promised to the Jews would come with deliverance. Jesus is also the Son of God because God confirmed Him as such by the miraculous power that was manifested through Him (Jn 20:30,31; Hb 1:1,2; 2:3,4).

PURPOSE

Matthew was written to a Jewish audience. He possibly has two purposes in mind. First, he seeks to reaffirm the messiahship of Jesus. In the book there are sixty-four references to the Old Testament. There are forty-three direct quotations from the Old Testament. Matthew wants the Christian audience to which he writes to understand that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah for which all Israel hoped.

Secondly, Matthew writes in order to contrast the religion of the religious leadership of Israel with the grace and truth that was revealed through Jesus. Because of the Jewish influence that came into the early church by the conversion of many Jews, there came in with these converts a Jewish approach to faith that was legal in nature. The theological understanding of religion that was practiced by the scribes and Pharisees was legalistic in reference to justification. In other words, the religious leaders of Israel approached God through a legal system of meritorious works that was based on the performance of worshipers. This system of religiosity was developed over centuries with the accumulation of traditions that were bound on the consciences of men (See comments 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9; intro. of Gl). Matthew seeks to manifest the difference between this system of religious thought and that which Jesus taught. Matthew manifests the contrast in order to identify the hard-hearted attitude of the religious leaders who rejected the grace of God that was manifested through Jesus (Ti 2:11).

The purpose of the book could also be based on two major ministries of teaching in reference to Jesus and His work. The first is 4:17 where Matthew records, “***From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’***” Jesus came to fulfill all things concerning prophecy of God’s work among humanity (Lk 24:44). As the Messiah, He came to turn Israel once again to God in order that they accept His kingdom reign that was soon to be established.

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Secondly, in 16:21 Matthew recorded, “*From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem ... and be killed.*” Jesus thus revealed to the disciples the purpose for incarnation into this world, though they did not at the time understand the concept and action of the incarnation. But He did explain that He must die on the cross for the salvation of all people. And at the time, they did not understand this concept. It is Matthew’s purpose, therefore, to inform his readers that Jesus knew His destiny, and thus, worked in His ministry toward the fulfillment of all prophecy concerning the His incarnation into this world and the cross. For in this mission, all prophecy must be fulfilled.

BOOK

Matthew seems to give a more detailed account of several events in the life of Jesus that are only recorded in brief in the records of Mark, Luke and John. As an eyewitness of the life and teachings of Jesus, Matthew seeks to prove the theme of the book. His emphasis in writing, therefore, focuses more on maintaining the theme of the book than on maintaining a chronological order of events in the ministry of Jesus. He is thus more topical in accomplishing the theme than in recording a chronological order of Jesus’ life. In writing to a Jewish mind to reaffirm the messiahship of Jesus, he is thus more Jewish in his literary style and composition.

Introduction To The Christ

(1:1 – 4:11)

Outline: (1) Genealogy of Jesus (1:17), (2) The birth of Jesus (1:18-25), (3) The visit of the Magi (2:1-12), (4) Jesus is taken to Egypt (2:13-18), (5) Jesus returns to Nazareth (2:19-23), (6) John, the Immerser (3:1-12), (7) Jesus begins His ministry (3:13-17), (8) The temptation of Jesus (4:1-11)

Chapter 1

GENEALOGY OF JESUS

(Lk 3:23-38)

Both Matthew and Luke record the genealogy of Jesus. However, they record such for different reasons. Matthew gives the account of the ancestry of Joseph, the legal and earthly parent of Jesus. Luke records the ancestry of Jesus through the genealogy of Mary, the mother of Jesus (Lk 3:23-38). Through his genealogy of Joseph, Matthew proves that Jesus is the legal heir to the throne of David. He is the One who has fulfilled all messianic prophecies of the Old Testament (See 2 Sm 7:12-16; Ps 89:29,36,37; 132:11).

In both Matthew and Luke the word “son” is used to designate four things: (1) an actual son through the flesh, (2) a distant ancestor (1:1), (3) a son-in-law (Lk 3:23), and (4) a son by creation (Lk 3:38). By marriage, Joseph was the son of Heli (Mary’s father). In this sense, therefore, Jo-

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seph is both the son of Jacob (1:16) and the son of Heli (Lk 3:23). Both Matthew and Luke use this common method of Jewish ancestral recording to prove that Jesus was of the royal Davidic lineage, and thus the rightful heir to the throne of David.

Matthew divides his account of the genealogy of Jesus into three sections: (1) Abraham to David (vss 1-6), (2) Solomon to the Babylonian captivity (vss 7-11), and (3) the Babylonian captivity to Jesus (vss 12-16).

1:1-17 Read the genealogies of 1 Ch 1; 2:1-15; 3:1-19; Rt 4:18-22. These genealogies give a background for the genealogies that are recorded here in Matthew and in Luke. **Book:** This is a book of origin or a genealogical table that gives the ancestry of Jesus (Gn 5:1; 37:2; Nm 3:1). **Jesus:** This name is actually a form of the name "Joshua." Joshua means "God is our helper," "deliverer," or "savior." Thus, the name is appropriate for the Son of God. The name Jesus was actually a common Jewish name. In the New Testament times it meant "Jehovah is salvation." **Christ:** The Greek word means "anointed." This is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word "Messiah." Jesus is the Christ, or the Messiah who fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies (Lk 24:44). **Son of David:** The phrase "son of" often refers to a distant relative. In other words, when one is the "son of" another, ancestors in the lineage can be left out by the chronicler. Cainan is placed between Shelah and Arphaxad in Luke 3:36, but he is left out of the genealogy of Genesis 11. **Begot:** This term is commonly used to refer to one who is a descendant's father. But in the listing of genealogies by Matthew and Luke, reference is to the descending ancestor. Often in biblical genealogies the prominent ancestor from which one was descended is listed and not the descendant's immediate father. **Tamar:** See Gn 38:12-26. **Ram:** This is the same as Arni (Lk 3:33). **Rahab:** She was a Gentile (See Ja 2:8-11; Hb 11:31). **Ruth:** She was a Gentile woman (Rt 4). **Joram ... Uzziah:** Matthew omits the kings Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah (2 Kg 8:24; 1 Ch 3:11; 2 Ch 22:1,11; 24:27) between Joram and Uzziah. He possibly does this in order to maintain the continuity of the "fourteen" generations (vs 17). **Jeconiah:** This king of Judah is also called Coniah (Jr 22:24,28) and Jehoiachin (2 Kg 24; 1 Ch 3). After this king of Judah, no one of his seed was to reign legally as a God-anointed king on the literal throne of David in Jerusalem in Palestine as king of Israel (See comments Jr 22:30; 36:30). This is one reason why Jesus could never reign as a king on this literal earth in the city of Jerusalem. **Carried away:** Jeconiah was carried into Babylonian captivity in 597 B.C. **From the captivity:** After spending seventy years in Babylonian captivity, the Jews returned to the land of Palestine in three trips. In 536 B.C. Sheshbazzar led the first group back (Ez 1-6). In 457 B.C. Ezra led the second group back (Ez 7-10). In 444 B.C. Nehemiah led the third group (Ne 1:1-13). **Mary, of whom was born Jesus:** Though he is discussing the lineage of Jesus through Joseph, Matthew attributes the birth of Jesus to Mary and not Joseph. Joseph had nothing to do with the conception, for Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit. Luke records in reference to Mary's conception concerning Joseph, "as was supposed." Such

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was supposed by those who knew Mary and Joseph, for confirmation of the virgin birth had not yet been made known. These statements that surround the conception and birth of Jesus uphold the fact of the virgin birth of Jesus by the Holy Spirit (1:23). **Fourteen generations:** In order to aid in the memorization of generations, the grouping of the generations was here placed in groups of fourteen. Matthew, as Ezra, intentionally left out some of the names in order to maintain the grouping of fourteen generations (See Er 7:1,2; 1 Ch 6:6-11). In this way, those who were to memorize the genealogy could do so. We thus check our understanding of the genealogy with the Old Testament.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

(Lk 1:1 – 2:38)

1:18 Engaged: Or, “espoused.” In the culture of the day, this civil agreement was more binding than a marital promise or engagement, though not as binding as a marriage bond (See Dt 20:7; 22:23,24). It was a legal agreement that was binding as a contract. If one were unfaithful after a betrothal, such a one would be considered an adulterer. Because of the binding of the betrothal, Joseph and Mary were considered husband and wife. **Before they came together:** Mary was pregnant with Jesus before Joseph and Mary had sexual intercourse, which sexual intercourse later resulted in other children being born after Jesus was born (See 13:55; Mk 6:3). **By the Holy Spirit:** At the time Mary conceived of the Holy Spirit, she had never had sexual intercourse. She was a virgin. Through the Holy Spirit, therefore, she became pregnant in a manner that was not according to the natural processes of conception. Since Jesus was the Son of God, we would expect nothing other than a miraculous virgin birth into this world. Such a birth is an essential teaching of the New Testament (See Jn 1:1,14; see also Lk 1:31-35).

1:19,20 Put her away secretly: Joseph did not want to embarrass Mary. Since a betrothal was almost as binding as a marriage contract, Joseph sought to secretly divorce Mary in order that she not be publicly shamed (See Dt 22:23,24). Joseph knew that Mary was pure in character. For this reason, he was puzzled concerning her conception. **Angel:** This could possibly have been Gabriel on another mission from God to man concerning the incarnation of Jesus (See Lk 1:19,26; compare Gn 16:7-9; Is 63:9; Dn 8:16; 9:21). **Do not fear:** It was the angel’s intentions to calm the anxiety of Joseph. He thus assured Joseph that God was at work in the conception. Mary was not involved in an adulterous affair.

1:21-23 The One in Mary’s womb, Jesus (1:1; Lk 1:31; 2:21), would have the mission of saving His people from their sins. **Jesus:** This Greek name means, “the Lord is salvation.” It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name “Joshua.” **Save:** Herein is the establishment of the mission of Jesus as the Son of God (See Lk 2:11; 19:10; Jn 1:29; At 4:12; 5:31; 13:23). **Prophet:** It was Isaiah who made this prophecy (Is 7:14). The Son of God was to be born of a virgin, and thus, He would be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Genesis 3:15. **Immanuel:** This name means “God with

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us” or “God in the flesh” (Is 7:14). Thus the character and position of Jesus on earth is expressed in this one name (Jn 1:14; see comments Ph 2:5-8). Here is a proclamation that Jesus was God on earth. God would dwell on earth through the incarnate Son of God.

1:24,25 *Did not know her until:* Joseph had no sexual intercourse with Mary until after Jesus was born (1:18). The word “until” clearly assumes that Joseph later had sexual intercourse with Mary, and from such, other children were born (13:55; Mk 6:3). However, Jesus was the first-born of Mary and Joseph (Lk 2:7). Jesus, therefore, was not the only child born to Mary. She was not a perpetual virgin after the birth of Jesus. She had other children, which children eventually became very influential among the disciples (See intro. to Js & Jd).

Chapter 2

THE VISIT OF THE MAGI

2:1 *Born in Bethlehem:* See Jg 17:9; 19:1; 1 Sm 17:12; Mc 5:2. David, the king of Israel, was born in Bethlehem, and thus, this city was referred to as the city of David (1 Sm 16:1,19). It is about ten kilometers south of Jerusalem. At the time of the decree of Augustus Caesar, Joseph and Mary were living in Nazareth (Lk 1:26,27; 2:1-5). They thus made the long journey to Bethlehem of Judea in obedience to the law of Augustus. (This is not the Bethlehem of Zebulun that is mentioned in Ja 19:15.)

Herod: See Lk 1:5. Herod the Great was the son of Antipater, an Idumean and descendant of Esau. He was proud, cruel and unmerciful as a ruler of the Jews. There are at least nine Herods mentioned in the New Testament (See 2:22; 14:3; Mk 6:17; Lk 3:1; At 24:24; 25:26). Herod the Great cruelly reigned from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C. according to our calendar today. This establishes the date of the birth of Jesus about two years earlier than 4 B.C., for Herod had sent out a decree before his death to kill all children under two years of age (See vss 16-18). In reference to this event, and according to our present calendar and Jesus’ death after a three and a half year ministry, the establishment of the church would be about A. D.

30. ***Wise men:*** The Greek word that is used here is “magi.” Magi were possibly Gentile astronomers from Arabia, Persia, Parthia, or even India.

2:2,3 *King of the Jews:* It was the hope of the Jews that the Messiah would come into the world. It was believed by many that the Messiah would supposedly reign as king on earth and restore national Israel to her former glory (See Jr 23:5; 30:9; Zc 9:9; Mt 27:11; Jn 1:49; 18:37; Lk 19:38; 23:38). For this reason, Herod saw the birth of this king as a threat to his throne.

Star: This was no natural phenomenon. The star was a miraculous signal sent by God to the Magi to alert them of the birth of the Messiah for whom they hoped. ***Worship:*** The fact that these wise men came from a great distance to see Jesus indicates that they had possibly received revelation concerning the birth of Jesus. For some reason, they made this great journey to the birth place of our Lord. ***Troubled:*** Herod did not want a rival “king of the Jews.” His pride and arrogance moved him to scheme against any possible contender for the crown. He thus moved

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with jealousy when he heard of the inquiries of the Magi.

2:4 Herod may have been ignorant of the prophecy of Micah 5:1,2 which spoke of Bethlehem as the place of the birth of the Messiah. For this reason, he possibly sought those who might know of any prophecy concerning a coming king. **Chief priests:** These were the principal leaders of the Jewish religious system. They were in charge of the temple (See 1 Ch 24:6; 2 Ch 34:13; Mt 2:7). **Scribes:** These were the educated men of the Jewish law. It was their responsibility in Israel to preserve and interpret the Sinai law and the Prophets for the people (See Ez 7:6; Mt 23:34; Lk 10:25; At 5:34). They were the lawyers of the law.

2:5-8 Micah made the prophecy of Micah 5:1,2 over seven hundred years before its fulfillment in the birth of Jesus (See Jn 7:42). **Ruler:** Jesus is the good shepherd who cares for the flock (Jn 10:11; 21:16; Hb 13:20; 1 Pt 2:25; 5:4; Rv 7:17). It was not Herod's plan to worship, but to destroy the newly born child whom he saw as a possible competitor for his throne.

2:9,10 This proves that the star of verse 2 was miraculous. It appears here again in order to direct the Magi to the babe. Its second appearance makes it possible for the Magi to find the babe without drawing attention to the birth place by making inquiries.

2:11,12 House: By this time, the babe had been moved from the manger to a house (See Lk 2:7-13). It is not known how old Jesus was at this time, though some feel that He could have been four weeks old. **Treasurers:** It was a custom of the orient to bring gifts to the newly born (See Is 60:6). Such gifts were commonly given to those who were considered noble. Some commentators believe that the three gifts symbolized the three works of Jesus, that is, He is king, priest and prophet. **Gold:** This would provide money for the flight to Egypt. **Frankincense:** This was incense that was made from the sap of a tree that grew both in Arabia and India. **Myrrh:** This was also a perfume that was made from the sap of a tree. In everything surrounding the birth of Jesus, God was directing the movements of the Magi in order that they not be discovered by Herod. Such was the case lest they be caught in Herod's scheme to kill Jesus.

JESUS IS TAKEN TO EGYPT

2:13-15 Egypt was a Roman province, but not under the jurisdiction of Herod. Therefore, the angel of the Lord instructed Joseph to flee to Egypt and away from the evil that was planned by Herod. **Death of Herod:** According to our calendar today, Herod the Great died on April 1, 4 B.C. **Out of Egypt:** The first time God called his "son" (Israel) out of Egypt was when the nation of Israel came out of Egyptian captivity (Ex 4:22,23; Hs 11:1). The statement of Hosea 11:1 is here called a prophecy in that Jesus is called out of Egypt. Israel's deliverance from Egyptian captivity was a prophetic action on God's part to portray the deliverance of His Son from the same country (Nm 24:7,8,17).

2:16-18 Exceedingly enraged: Herein is revealed the evil nature of Herod. All babies of two years of age and under were killed in Bethlehem

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and the area. This action affirms that Jesus was born at least within the two year period before Herod's death on April 1, 4 B.C. **Rachel weeping:** This Rachel was the ancestor of Benjamin and wife of Jacob whose tomb was in Ramah near Bethlehem. Jeremiah's prophecy was of the Israelites who were carried away to Babylonian captivity (Jr 31:15). The second fulfillment of the prophecy is here realized in the death of the babies of Bethlehem.

JESUS RETURNS TO NAZARETH

2:19-22 After Herod's death on April 1, 4 B.C., Joseph was called through a God-given dream to return to Nazareth (1:24; Lk 2:39). Those who sought: Reference here is possibly to all those who were of Herod's scheme to kill the baby Jesus. This would be the officers of Herod's court and Herod's wicked son Antipater, all of whom were killed five days before the death of Herod. **Archelaus:** When Herod died, Augustus Caesar of Rome divided his kingdom among Herod's three sons, Philip, Herod Antipas and Archelaus. Philip and Antipas received Galilee and Perea, and Archelaus received Judea, Idumea and Samaria. However, because of his cruelty, Archelaus was deposed by Rome in A.D. 6.

2:23 Nazareth: This was an insignificant village and Joseph's former home (See Jn 1:45,46). It may have also been the home of Mary (See Lk 1:26,27). It was in this area that Jesus grew up, becoming strong in body and filled with wisdom (Lk 2:40,52). **Prophets:** There is no specific Old Testament prophet who spoke the words quoted here. By inspiration, Matthew makes a consensus of the prophets concerning the humble abode and environment from which the Messiah and Son of God would come. This nature of the abode of the Messiah was prophesied (See Is 11:1; 53:1-4). **Nazarene:** Nazareth was a place of contempt (See Jn 1:46; 7:52). Such would only naturally be the dwelling place of the One who would call the humble of the world into a kingdom reign of servanthood (See Mk 1:24; At 22:8).

Chapter 3

JOHN THE IMMERSER

(Mk 1:1-8; Lk 3:1-18)

3:1 Those days: These events take place about twenty-nine years after the events of chapters 1 and 2 (See Lk 3:1,2,23; Jn 1:6-34). **John:** This is the prophesied John who would prepare the way for Jesus (Ml 3:1; 4:4-6). John the Baptist (immerser) was the son of the priest, Zacharias. His mother was Elizabeth (See Mk 1:2-8; Lk 1:5). John would also be the cousin of Jesus. **Baptist:** Or, "the immerser." John is here identified by what he did, that is, baptize people in water for remission of sins (Mk 1:3,4; 6:14,25). **Wilderness of Judea:** This was the desert west of the Dead Sea and possibly north of the area where the Jordan River enters the Dead Sea (Lk 1:80; 3:2; see Jg 1:16; Ja 15:61). John preached in the wilderness. Those who wanted to hear him had to come from their city environment to the humble surroundings of a preacher preaching in the

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desert. Therefore, John was not of the religious establishment. He was a humble servant of God who had forsaken the material world in order to announce the coming of the Son of God.

3:2,3 Repent: John's call to the people was for a total commitment to renounce rebellion against God and turn in heart to a kingdom reign that was near unto being established (Ex 33:11,15; Jl 2:12,13; Is 55:7; Zc 1:3,4; At 3:19; 2 Co 7:10). This was also the subject of the preaching of Jesus (Lk 3:3; 13:3). **Kingdom of heaven:** This is the kingdom reign that originates from heaven (11:11; 19:23). Prophecy of such was now in fulfillment as John prepared the way for the King (See Is 2:2,3; Dn 2:44; 7:13,14). This is the kingdom reign that would be announced in Acts 2 and would be the fulfillment of all prophecy concerning the reign of the Son of God (See 4:17; 6:10; 10:7; Mk 1:15; 9:1; 10:24; Lk 7:28; 9:27; 10:9; 21:31; see Cl 1:23; Hb 12:23,28). **At hand:** The kingdom reign was near unto being established. It was something that God would establish regardless of the enemies of Jesus who would nail Him to the cross (See Jn 1:11). Luke records that Jesus quoted Isaiah 40:3-6 (Lk 3:4-6). John was the prophesied Elijah who was to be the forerunner for the Messiah (See Mt 4:5,6; Lk 1:15-17; Jn 1:19-23). As the forerunners functioned for the kings of Israel, John came first to proclaim that the King was coming (Lk 1:17). He prepared the hearts of the people that they receive the One coming after him (Lk 3:3; Jn 1:23).

3:4 Garment of camel's hair: John was not the preacher from the city. His clothes portrayed self-denial and sacrifice in reference to those things the religious leaders cherished in the cities (Compare Elijah's dress in 2 Kg 1:8; Mt 3:4; 17:9-13). God sent him to the wilderness to preach in order to call those who were truly repentant out of their materialistic lives in the cities. He called them to accept the life of self-denial and sacrifice. **Locusts:** These were grasshoppers that John ate for his food (Lv 11:22).

3:5,6 All ... went out to him: John's ministry in the wilderness placed the burden of commitment on the shoulders of those who would hear the message of God. They had to go to him because he did not come to them in the city. **Baptized ... in the Jordan:** There was much water in the Jordan in order to immerse people (Jn 3:23). **Confessing their sins:** The repentant humbled themselves by publicly confessing their sins.

3:7 Pharisees: The Pharisees were a Jewish sect of legalistic religious leaders in Israel. The sect originated in Palestine during the interbiblical period that began after 400 B.C. By the time Jesus came, they were established as an influential sect of religious leaders in Judaism. They were wealthy, lovers of money (Lk 16:14), religiously zealous, and held the consciences of the people captive by the intimidation of their religious control. They maintained a very legalistic interpretation of Sinai law that they combined with numerous traditions (See comments 15:1-9; 23; Mk 7:1-9; 8:11-15; Lk 11:52; 18:9-15). **Sadducees:** The Sadducees were a religious group in opposition to the Pharisees. The Sadducees probably originated with a man named Zadok, who was a president of the Sanhedrin around 250 B.C. The Sadducees denied the existence of angels,

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spirits and the future resurrection (22:23-34; At 4:1,2; 23:6-8). **Generation of vipers:** They were children of snakes. With their venom of legalistic hypocritical religion, they infested the minds of innocent victims in Israel with their traditional religion (12:34; 23:33). **Wrath to come:** God was in the process of bringing judgment on the nation of Israel through the destruction of the Jewish State in A.D. 70 (See comments ch 24). The Jews' rejection of the kingdom reign of Jesus would result in their being rejected by God, and thus, bring God's judgment upon themselves (See Jn 12:48).

3:8,9 Fruits worthy of repentance: These religious leaders must manifest in their lives the results of repentance (At 26:20; Lk 17:4). Their mere curiosity in coming to hear what John was preaching was not good enough. They needed a heart change that would result in a change of life-style. **Do not think:** Because they claimed Abraham as their physical father by genealogy, they thought such gave them a special relationship with God (Jn 8:33,39; see Gn 12:1-3; 15). **Raise up children to Abraham:** These Pharisees and Sadducees failed to realize that the true Jew was not one who was of Abraham's genealogy. A true Jew and son of Abraham was such by faith (8:11,12; see comments Jn 8:31-41; Rm 2:28,29; 8:28,29; 4:1-5; 9:6-11; Gl 3:26-29).

3:10 Ax is already laid at the root: National Israel as God's chosen nation was coming to an end. This was John's prophecy of the end of national Israel that would take place in A.D. 70 when the Romans would destroy Jerusalem (See comments ch 24). Those Jews who did not repent and turn to the One about whom John was speaking would be cut down and thrown into the fire during the destruction of Jerusalem. That which John was preaching was the ax that was laid at the root of national Israel in order to cut it down.

3:11 I ... baptize you: The Greek word *baptizo* means "to dip," "plunge," "immerse," or "overwhelm" (See comments Rm 6:3-6; Cl 2:12). John was preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mk 1:4; see Lk 3:3). **I am not worthy to bear:** John realized the greatness of the One who would follow. He thus considered Jesus more than a prophet, for John himself was a prophet. **Baptize you with the Holy Spirit:** John is again prophesying concerning what would come in the near future. Jesus would baptize with or in the Holy Spirit those of Israel who would accept His calling to apostleship (See comments At 2:1-4). The apostles would be the accepted new leadership of the spiritual Israel as opposed to the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees who assumed the leadership of national Israel. There would thus be a change in spiritual leadership in Israel from those who had stolen the flock of God to those who humbled themselves as servants of God. **And fire:** The religious leadership of Israel that rejected Jesus would be baptized with fire in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. However, God would give them opportunity to hear the Son and the apostles before He rained down judgment on them in the destruction of national Israel.

3:12 Winnowing fan is in His hand: Through His ministry and the

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disciples' preaching of His message, Jesus would separate the chaff (the disobedient) from the wheat (the obedient sons of Abraham by faith). **Unquenchable fire:** There was no turning of God from the destruction that was now looming in the near future. John's message was urgent in order to turn Israel from their religion that they had created after their own desires and traditions (Mk 7:1-9). Jesus' message contained the same urgency in that He preached that they must repent or perish (Lk 13:3).

JESUS BEGINS HIS MINISTRY

(Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-23; Jn 1:19 – 4:45)

3:13-15 *Jesus came from Galilee:* Jesus was about thirty years old when He began His ministry (Lk 3:23). He here walks about one hundred kilometers from Nazareth to the place where John was preaching. **Be baptized:** Jesus was without sin (Hb 4:15). However, the baptism of John was a command of God, for John had received the message of such from God. **Fulfill all righteousness:** In order to fulfill all righteousness, that is, complete the commandments of God, Jesus, though without sin, had to be baptized by John's baptism (See Hb 5:8,9; 10:7). At His immersion, He was manifested to be the Lamb of God (Jn 1:34).

3:16,17 This particular event portrays the three manifestations of the one God. Jesus is here baptized. The Holy Spirit descends on Him as a dove. The Father speaks out of heaven. Though three in manifestation, God is still one. He could have manifested Himself in numerous ways in order to carry out the eternal plan to save man. The fact that He has so chosen to manifest Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit does not mean that there are three Gods. It simply means that the one God has manifested Himself as three in eternity (See 12:18; 17:5; 28:19; Mk 9:7; Lk 9:35; Jn 12:28-30; 2 Pt 1:17). **Like a dove:** This does not mean that the Holy Spirit was incarnate in the body of a dove. A simile is used here. This is a comparison using "like" or "as." The descending of the Spirit on Jesus was God's signal to John that this was the Lamb of God (See Lk 3:22; Jn 1:32-34). **My beloved Son:** See Ps 2:7; Jn 3:16. Jesus was God's Son who was sent into the world to save the world (Lk 19:10).

Chapter 4

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

(Mk 1:12,13; Lk 4:1-13)

4:1 When God starts great movements, His messengers are called to the desert. Moses, John the Baptist, Paul and Jesus all went to the desert before going to the people. In Jesus' case, it was God's will that He be placed in a situation that would allow Him to be tempted in all ways as those He would save (Hb 4:15). He was thus taken to the desert for forty days of fasting followed by the temptations of Satan. **Led up by the Spirit:** Luke mentions that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit at this time, and thus He had received at His baptism the miraculous power of the Spirit in order to do the works of the Father throughout His ministry (Lk 4:1; compare comments Ph 2:6-8). Matthew emphasizes the fact that it

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was the Holy Spirit who was taking Jesus to the wilderness for this period of fasting. **Devil:** Herein is mentioned for the first time in the New Testament, the accuser and deceiver of all men (See 13:19; Lk 22:31; Ep 6:11; 1 Th 2:18; 2 Tm 2:26; 1 Pt 5:8,9; Rv 20:7-10). Behind the scenes of Jesus' ministry, Satan worked to deter Jesus from His work. This period of fasting would begin the temptations of Jesus. The temptations would not cease until the earthly ministry was completed.

4:2,3 Fasted forty days and forty nights: Jesus went without food for forty consecutive days and nights (Mk 1:12,13; see Ex 34:28; Dt 9:17-19; 1 Kg 19:8; Mt 6:16-18; 9:14; Lk 2:36,37; At 13:1-3; 2 Co 6:4,5). We are not told why He fasted forty days, unless there is some significance to the forty years the nation of Israel wandered in the wilderness of Sinai because of their refusal to take the land of promise. Because Jesus was vulnerable during and after His days of fasting, Satan continually tempted Him in order to make Him turn from His ministry (Mk 1:13). It was at the end of such a fast that Jesus would be most vulnerable to any temptation. In the same manner as he tempted Eve in the garden of Eden (Gn 3), Satan tempted Jesus after the lust of the eyes and flesh, and the pride of life (1 Jn 2:16). However, even at this time when Jesus would have been most vulnerable to yield to temptation, He did not give in to the lure of Satan's temptations.

Command ... stones: Satan appealed to the physical hunger of Jesus in order to tempt Him to take control of His situation. The temptation was to miraculously satisfy his hunger by satisfying that lust which is most powerful in the life of a man, that is, hunger. In the temptation, therefore, Satan was seeking to tempt Jesus to use miraculous power for that for which it was not intended, that is, selfish reasons.

4:4-7 It is written: See Dt 8:3. Jesus countered temptation with the word of God (At 20:32; 1 Th 2:13; 2 Pt 1:3). **Bread alone:** Physical life is important. However, the abundant life is the life about which Jesus spoke in John 10:10 that is within the individual. It is this life that must be nourished with spiritual food. **Holy city:** This was Jerusalem (Lk 4:9; Ne 11:1,18; see Mt 27:53). **Pinnacle:** This was the highest part of the structure of the temple that faced the Kidron Valley. **Cast Yourself down:** Satan appealed to Jesus' earthly desire to prove Himself miraculously before the people to be the Son of God. He thus tempted Jesus to perform some wondrous act by saving Himself from a fall. In this supposed act of defiance to the laws of gravity, Jesus was tempted to speed up the process of God's proving that He was the Messiah. But Jesus would not resort to such acts to amuse in order to be proved to be sent from God. **It is written:** Satan seeks to provoke Jesus. He quoted from the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament (See Ps 91:11,12). **It is written:** Jesus countered Satan's quotation of Psalm 91:11,12 by putting it into the correct context of the general teaching of Scripture (Dt 6:16). Thus, Jesus gives us an example that Scripture must always be understood in the whole text of the theme of the Scriptures. Jesus affirmed that Psalm 91:11,12 would be fulfilled according to God's plan of work in the life of Jesus. Satan had no power to subject Jesus to his control, nor to change

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the work of God through Jesus. In the context of Psalm 91, verses 13,14 state that God would in His work in the life of Jesus destroy the works of Satan.

4:8,9 Devil took Him up: Jesus willfully allowed Satan to tempt Him because He knew that such was in the plan of God. **Showed Him:** Satan could have presented the world governments to Jesus, over which he had power to give Jesus authority. **I will give You:** By the power of deception, Satan has control over many governments of the world (Lk 4:6). Here he tempts Jesus to exercise the pride of life, and thus, co-rule with him in his rule of mankind through his power to deceive the nations. Such could not tempt Jesus for He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands and that He was headed to a throne that would make Him King of kings and Lord of lords (See 28:18; Jn 13:3; 17:2; 1 Tm 6:15). Jesus' kingship would never be over nations of the world. His kingdom reign would be from heaven at the right hand of God. When He comes again, He will return His present kingdom reign to the Father (See comments 1 Co 15:26-28).

4:10,11 Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13 in order to show that it is sinful to worship Satan and angels (Rv 19:10), men (At 10:26) or anything other than God. Only God, the creator of all things, is worthy of worship. **Devil left Him:** Satan turned from tempting Jesus only for a short time (Lk 4:13; Jn 14:30). He had tempted Jesus at a time when Jesus was most vulnerable (Hb 1:14; 4:15; Js 4:7). He would tempt Him again at a time when Jesus would be susceptible to temptation. This time would possibly be when He neared His death on the cross. **Angels came and ministered:** Angels ministered to the physical needs of Jesus after the forty days of fasting. Thus the Father in heaven was always with the Son on earth throughout the ministry of the Son (26:53; Lk 22:43). After the temptation, Jesus returned to Galilee.

Demands Of The Christ

(4:12 – 7:29)

Outline: (1) Jesus goes to Galilee (4:12-17), (2) Call of Peter, Andrew, James and John (4:18-22), (3) Jesus does great works (4:23-25), (4) Sermon on the Mount (5:1,2), (5) The Beatitudes (5:3-12), (6) Salt and light of the world (5:13-16), (7) The Sinai law (5:17-20), (8) Unity of believers (5:21-26), (9) Marital unfaithfulness (5:27-32), (10) Oaths (5:33-37), (11) Love of enemies (5:38-48), (12) Sharing (6:1-4), (13) Prayer (6:5-15), (14) Fasting (6:16-18), (15) Treasures in heaven (6:19-34), (16) Judging others (7:1-5), (17) Seeking God's blessings (7:6-14), (18) Identifying the source of fruit (7:15-29)

JESUS GOES TO GALILEE

(Mk 1:14,15; Lk 4:14,15)

4:12,13 Matthew passes over several events in the early ministry of Jesus in order to begin immediately, a narrative of the Galilean ministry (See Jn 1:43; 2:3; 4:1-43). **John ... cast into prison:** John the Baptist

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was seized by Herod (14:1-13; see Mk 1:14; Lk 3:20). The time between the events of verses 11 and 12 could be about one year. **Capernaum:** See 9:1-9; 11:23; 17:24; Mk 1:21; 7:1,2; Jn 6:59.

4:14-17 Matthew quoted Isaiah's prophecy of the work of Jesus in Palestine (Is 8:22; 9:1,2). **Great light:** This is the light of Jesus and the gospel (Jn 1:4-9). **Repent:** See 3:2; Lk 13:3. Jesus' notoriety became great at this time in His ministry (Lk 4:14). **Kingdom of heaven:** This was the kingdom reign of Deity that would be visibly manifested from heaven (Mk 9:1). **At hand:** Jesus and John called on people to change their lives in order that they accept the coming kingdom reign of Jesus. Only repentant hearts would allow the kingdom reign of Jesus to be done on earth as it is done in heaven (6:9,10; Lk 17:20,21). The kingdom reign of Jesus was near. God would establish Jesus as king of all things regardless of the rejection that He would receive from many on earth.

CALL OF PETER, ANDREW, JAMES & JOHN

(Mk 1:16-20; Lk 5:1-11)

4:18-20 **Sea of Galilee:** See Lk 5:1; Jn 6:1; 21:1; Nm 34:11; Ja 11:2; 1 Kg 15:20. **Simon:** See Mt 16:18; Jn 20:2. Jesus named Simon "Peter," which word means "rock" or "stone" (Jn 1:41,42). Peter is also called Cephas (1 Co 1:12; 15:5; Gl 2:9). Peter and Andrew were possibly in the fishing business with James and John. **Follow Me:** Peter, Andrew, James and John had possibly been listening to Jesus several months before obeying this formal call to follow Him at this time. The events of John 1:35-42 probably took place sometime before this formal call that is recorded here by Matthew. **Fishers of men:** Through the call of the gospel, they would capture the hearts of sincere people. Herein is the first mention of the great commission and work of the disciples of Jesus (28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). This commission would identify throughout history the work of true disciples of Jesus.

4:21,22 **James ... John:** See 10:2; 20:20. James and John were the sons of the influential Zebedee. James was the first of the twelve apostles to die (At 12:2). John was possibly the last. Both worked with Peter and Andrew in the fishing business (Lk 5:10). They were cousins of Jesus (27:56; Jn 19:25), and thus, they grew up knowing one another. **Zebedee:** In view of Zebedee's wealth and the high priest's knowledge of John, Zebedee was evidently an influential man (See Mk 1:20; Lk 5:10; Jn 18:15). **Left the boat and their father:** These disciples left work, homes and family in order to follow Jesus (See 10:37-39; Mk 10:28; Lk 9:23). They knew the cost of discipleship. They realized that what they found was greater than what they had.

JESUS DOES GREAT WORKS

4:23 **Jesus went about:** Jesus preached in a circuit throughout Galilee. He did not just stay in one or two places (See 9:35 - 11:1; Lk 8:1-3). **Teaching ... preaching:** Jesus was effective because He continually taught and preached the word of God (See 9:23; 13:54; 26:55; Mk 1:21;

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6:2; Lk 22:53; Jn 6:59; 18:20). **Synagogues:** The Jewish synagogue came into existence during and after the Babylonian captivity which ended in 536 B.C. (See Ez 8:1 for a possible example of the beginning of the synagogue in Babylonian captivity). The synagogue was thus brought back to Palestine with the return of the first captives. The synagogues were a Jewish cultural center and place of teaching. Synagogues were not places of formal assembly, since all Jews in any community could not possibly assemble in a synagogue. Neither were there synagogues in every Jewish community. **All kinds of sickness:** This does not say that He healed everyone, but that He had the power to heal all kinds of sicknesses and diseases (See 8:16; 9:35; 14:14; Mk 1:34; 3:10). Through miraculous work, Jesus was proved to be the Son of God (Jn 3:2; 20:30,31).

4:24 His fame: See Mk 1:28. Jesus' reputation for healing probably spread faster and farther than His message. **Diseases:** Jesus' power to heal people of all kinds of diseases proved His miraculous ability over physical laws, and thus, proved that He was more than a prophet and man. Since Jesus was the creator of all flesh, then certainly He had the power to heal all fleshly ailments (See comments Cl 1:16). **Possessed with demons:** See 8:16,28,33; 9:32; 12:22; 15:22; Mk 1:32; 5:15. It was the purpose and work of Jesus to come to this world in order to destroy the works of the devil (Hb 2:14; Ep 4:8). He came in order to openly crush Satan and his evil works (Gn 3:15; Mk 3:23-26). In doing this, Jesus made a public show of Satan by openly destroying his works (Cl 2:15; see Mt 12:29; Lk 10:18; Jn 12:31). Therefore, God allowed demons to miraculously possess people in the 1st century in order to give an opportunity for Jesus and His disciples to openly manifest power over Satan and all his works. Every time a demon was cast out by Jesus or His disciples, it was an open victory of righteousness over evil (See 9:33; 12:22,23,28,29; Lk 10:17-19). Once the superiority of Jesus and his disciples over Satan was proved, however, demon possession was no longer allowed to exist. We have the record of these victories of good over evil in the New Testament for all mankind to see throughout history. God does not continually have to prove throughout history what He proved through Jesus and the early disciples in the 1st century when He allowed demons to possess people. For this reason, God has not allowed demons to possess people since the 1st century. Satan controls or dwells in an individual today insofar as that individual allows himself to be controlled by evil influences and the desire of one to behave according to the will of Satan. This is different from New Testament demon possession. We must allow the New Testament to be the dictionary that defines the characteristics of demon possession (See 9:32-34; 12:22,23; Mk 9:17-29; Lk 4:33-37). Satan's work today is through deception, and thus, the New Testament gives many warnings that we be not deceived (24:23,24; 1 Co 6:9; Gl 6:7; 2 Th 2:9,10; 1 Tm 4:1,2; Rv 12:9; 13:14).

4:25 Great multitudes followed Him: See Mk 3:7,8; Lk 6:17. Matthew's list of the area from which the multitudes came would include all of Palestine, as well as territory on the east side of the Jordan River. Hun-

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dreds of people followed Jesus wherever He went. These crowds often numbered in the thousands (14:16-21; 15:32-38). He was constantly with people, and thus, always teaching. **Beyond the Jordan:** This would be the area of Perea.

Chapter 5 SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The following three chapters were directed specifically to the Jews in their religious context at the time of Jesus' ministry. The content of these chapters is often paralleled with what Luke recorded in Luke 6:17-49, though Luke's account is referred to by some as the "Sermon on the Plain." Luke's record is more likely another message that Jesus delivered at a different location and time, but was similar to the lesson that was delivered on this occasion. It is unlikely that Jesus spoke only one time on these important truths. It is correct to assume that Jesus spoke on these essential teachings on more than one occasion. In this message Jesus sets forth the natural behavioral response of those who love God. His emphasis is not on establishing a legal code of conduct, but on obedience to God in response to loving God with all one's heart, soul and mind (22:37,38), and one's neighbor as himself (22:39,40; see comments Cl 5:13-26).

5:1,2 A mountain: The traditional site of this sermon was a mountain between Mount Tabor and Tiberius. He sat down: It was traditional during these times that the teacher sit while teaching and the audience would stand (26:55).

THE BEATITUDES

5:3 Blessed: This could also be translated "happy." Happiness in heart results from the application in life of the following characteristics.

Poor in spirit: Happy are those who are not proud, conceited or arrogant concerning their spiritual relationship with God. One must recognize his or her humanity, one's spiritual poverty and destitution (See Rm 7:24,25). One must empty oneself of self-reliance and learn to humble himself or herself before God. Those with such an attitude of mind will submit to the kingdom reign of God (Is 61:3; Lk 6:20; Js 4:6-10; 1 Pt 5:6,7).

5:4 Mourn: See Lk 6:21-25. Happy are those who recognize their spiritual poverty, and thus, humbly grieve over their sinfulness (Compare Jn 16:20; Rm 5:3,4; 2 Co 7:10; Hb 12:11; Js 1:2,3; see Is 61:3; Ps 126:5). The humble person recognizes his or her spiritual poverty, and thus mourns over his or her inadequacies before God.

5:5 Meek: When one mourns over his or her sin, relationship with others changes. He or she becomes mild, gentle, lowly and unselfish in character (See Ps 37:11). One is not arrogant or self-seeking. The meek will inherit the earth in the sense that they will enjoy the greatest that life has to offer (Jn 10:10). Because they understand the brevity of life and the temporary nature of material things, their concentration of thought is on that which is above (Cl 3:1-3).

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5:6 *Hunger and thirst:* Those who realize their sinful condition and mourn over their sin, hunger and thirst after the justification (righteousness) that can come only from God by His grace. They seek the knowledge of God through His word (See Ps 19:1,2; 119:97,172; Is 55:1,2; Lk 1:6; Jn 4:14; 6:48; Rm 1:17; 1 Jn 2:29). It is the word of God that will supply knowledge of how to be justified of one's sin (2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:3; 2:2; 3:18). God is the source of all righteousness.

5:7 *Merciful:* Those who recognize their own spiritual poverty are merciful to others. They sympathize and have pity on others. They thus seek to relieve the suffering of others because God has had mercy on them in relation to their sin (See Ps 41:1; Pv 1:25; 14:21; Hb 2:17). Contrary to the legalistically proud who seek to judge, the meek have mercy (See Js 2:13). Their mercy will reap mercy from God (18:35; Lk 6:37).

5:8 *Pure:* See Ps 24:4. Happy are those who do not seek evil, but are sincere. Without guile or a vile heart of evil motives, they do not seek to find evil in others (Compare Js 4:8 with At 15:9; 1 Th 5:23; 1 Tm 1:5; 1 Pt 1:22; see Js 1:27). **See God:** The pure in heart will understand the pure nature of God (Compare Hb 11:27; Jn 14:9).

5:9 *Peacemakers:* Those who recognize their own sinfulness will seek peace of mind with others (Compare Pv 11:13; Gl 6:1; 2 Tm 2:22-26). Such are sons of God for they portray the spirit of God in their relationship with others. They are not contentious, nor do they have a spirit to argue with others.

5:10-12 *Persecuted:* Those who portray in their lives the above characteristics will be sons of God. Being such will bring persecution from those of the world who do not understand such behavior (At 14:22; Gl 4:29; 2 Tm 2:3,9,10; 3:12; compare Mk 3:6; Lk 6:7,11). Christians are persecuted because they refuse to walk in the darkness of the world (1 Pt 3:14; 4:4,16). **Kingdom:** See comments 11:11. **Rejoice:** This is the attitude of those who truly understand the inner nature of the Christian life. They are able to rejoice in persecution for they know that life exists beyond this world (At 5:41; Rm 8:17; Cl 1:24; Js 1:2-4; see comments At 14:22). **Prophets:** See Jr 20:2; 2 Ch 24:21; 36:16; At 7:52; 2 Th 2:15; Js 5:10. The same evil envy that led to the persecution of the prophets of the Old Testament will also lead to the persecution of Christians who stand up for their faith. Those who do something for the Lord are sometimes criticized by those who stand by and do nothing.

SALT & LIGHT OF THE WORLD

5:13,14 *You are the salt:* See Mk 9:50; Lk 14:34ff. As salt preserves food, so Christians with their godly characters preserve society from moral decay. **Lost its flavor:** The impurities of unrefined salt had no preservation qualities. When Christians lose their preservative influence of a godly example, they are useless for God to preserve the decay of society. **Light:** Christians who live after godly principles are a light that brings hope to a world that is lost in darkness (See Jn 8:12; Ph 1:27; 2 Pt 1:19).

5:15,16 *Basket:* See Lk 8:16-18. If the influence of the Christian

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is covered, it does not affect the community. Timid disciples affect few people. **Let your light so shine:** Letting one's light shine is not an arrogant manner of behavior. One should simply not be ashamed to live the Christian life in the midst of his community (Compare Rm 1:16). By living the principles of God in the community, one will give hope to those who desire an escape from the world that is in the bondage of darkness (1 Pt 2:12; see comments 1 Pt 3:15).

THE SINAI LAW

5:17 Destroy the law or the prophets: The Greek word translated "destroy" here means "to dissolve" or "undo." Jesus did not come to show disrespect to the Sinai law. He came to fulfill its purpose, not violate its principles. The fulfillment of the law meant the end of the law. Jesus here shows the stability of the Sinai law. He does not do this in order to indicate that the law was to continue, but to teach that the law would end when its purpose was fulfilled. Unfortunately, the Jews misunderstood this fact. They did not understand that the authority of the law was to end in the coming of the Messiah. They thought that it would never end. But it would end when the Messiah came (See Cl 2:14-16; Hb 10:9). Through the prophets, God stated that the law would change when the covenant changed (Jr 31:31-33; Hb 8:8ff). See comments Gl 3:24,25. **Law:** Reference is to the first of the three divisions the Jews made of the Old Testament (Gn through Dt). **Prophets:** Reference is to Joshua through Malachi.

5:18,19 See Lk 16:17. **Jot:** This is the Hebrew letter *yod*, which is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. **Tittle:** This is a small mark which distinguishes different Hebrew letters. **Law:** Reference is to the entire Sinai law. **Fulfilled:** All things would be fulfilled in the time that God designated when they should be accomplished (Lk 24:44). The coming of Jesus designated the time when God said the law would be fulfilled. **Break ... these least commandments:** The Greek word of "break" means "loose," as it is used in Mark 1:7 and Luke 13:15; 19:30,31. In the context of Jesus' Jewish audience, anyone who would loosen, or weaken the authority of any Sinai law commandment of God was considered disobedient to God's authority. **Kingdom:** The Jews to whom Jesus addressed these words were under the kingdom reign of the Father. They, as John the Baptist, were under the rule of the kingdom of the Father that was in existence at the time these words were spoken (See comments 11:11,12).

5:20 The disciples' righteousness must go beyond the boastful, self-proclaimed righteousness of the accepted religious leaders of their day. It must be a righteousness that must be sourced through God's grace and not the efforts of legal law-keeping that was promoted by the scribes and Pharisees. **Will not enter:** It was the call of Jesus that men repent. Such repentance demanded that they accept the kingdom reign of the Father. Their repentance would prepare them to accept Jesus' kingdom reign that was soon to be established. They had to understand that as the will of the Lord is done in heaven, so it must be done in the hearts of all people on earth who would be obedient subjects of the kingdom reign of Jesus.

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UNITY OF BELIEVERS

5:21 *You have heard:* Jesus emphasizes what they had heard from interpreters of the Sinai law. However, the interpretations of these interpreters were often a corrupt understanding of the law. God's law does not cause division. It is the twisted interpretations of men that cause the division. ***You will not murder:*** See Ex 20:13; Dt 5:17. The punishment dictated by the Sinai law for murder was death (Ex 21:12). However, the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day corrupted the application of the law by saying that those who committed murder only had to be brought to judgment.

5:22 *Angry:* Any who would have murderous thoughts in his heart against a fellow man is considered in the eyes of Jesus to be a murderer. ***Raca:*** This was an expression of reproach and contempt that meant "empty head" or "vain fellow" (See 2 Sm 6:20). Those who would express words of enmity are guilty of sin against their fellow man. Jesus teaches that all such sins of attitude are punishable by three stages of inflicted punishment: the judgment, the council, and finally, the destruction of hell (10:28). The Sinai law demanded punishment of the outward actions of crime against one's fellow man. However, Jesus seeks to correct the heart that causes the outward crimes. ***Council:*** This is the Jewish Sanhedrin of seventy men. ***Hell:*** This is the destruction of soul and body in the gehenna that is the final punishment of the wicked (See comments 10:28; 25:41; 2 Th 1:6-9).

5:23-26 It is useless to worship God when one has sinned against his brother. Reconciliation with one's brother is necessary before one can worship, for one cannot worship the God of mercy and love by harboring a heart of hate that shows no mercy. ***Agree with your adversary:*** Or, "to be at harmony with." One must correct the disagreement quickly lest one's heart carry out some evil motive. An unforgiving heart will become bitter and twisted. ***Adversary:*** This word is from the accuser in a lawsuit. It is better to settle the dispute before it reaches the court, else the judge will exercise the law against one. Jesus here places the responsibility of reconciliation on the shoulders of the offending party. In 18:15-17 He placed the responsibility of reconciliation on the shoulders of the offended party (See 6:14,15; 18:23-35). Once the punishment has been delivered, it is too late for actions of reconciliation.

MARITAL UNFAITHFULNESS

5:27,28 In this context we must keep in mind that Jesus was talking to Jews. Both He and the Jews were living under the Sinai law. ***You have heard:*** Jesus again addresses an interpretation of the law by the religious leaders. ***Adultery:*** See Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18. The Sinai law penalty for adultery was death by stoning (Lv 20:10; Dt 22:22-27). Adultery was the act of breaking the marriage contract. Such would be broken by the action of one party going outside the marriage bond and sexually engaging oneself with another person. ***Looks at a woman to lust:*** What Jesus condemns is not the look of admiration and affection, but the lustful look with the intent

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to commit an adulterous sexual act (Jb 31:1; Pv 6:25; Gl 5:16; 1 Pt 2:11).

5:29,30 Jesus gives a very vivid illustration to remove the source of adultery. He encourages one to shun any temptation to commit such (18:8; Mk 9:43). **Hell:** This is the Greek word “gehenna” that refers to the final end of the wicked. It originally referred to the rubbish dump of the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem where adulterers were stoned and burned (See Rm 8:13; Gl 5:19,20,24; Cl 3:5-8; Hb 13:4; see comments 25:41).

Stumble: The Greek word here refers to a snare or stumbling block. Any part of the body that would cause one to commit adultery must be brought under control. The lust of the flesh must be controlled at all cost.

5:31,32 Certificate of divorce: Moses gave the law of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 in order to close the door on divorce for every possible reason, for the Jews were divorcing for many reasons at the time when the law was given. Jesus was addressing the Jews who were in a covenant relationship with God. Under this covenant, they were divorcing for many reasons as in the days of Moses. He thus makes it clear that marriage to one who has been unjustly put away by divorce is marriage to an adulterated person, or one with whom a marriage contract has been broken. **Causes her:** When the innocent party has been divorced, he or she is now known as one with whom a marriage contract has been broken (See 19:3-9; Mk 10:2-12; Lk 16:18). Jesus also makes it clear to the Jews that the only valid cause for divorce among those who are in a covenant relationship with God, is fornication. Jesus thus seeks to better the community of God by making this the only reason for divorce, for the Jews were divorcing for several reasons at the time Jesus came (See comments 1 Co 7:8-24 where Paul discusses the marriage relationship between a Christian and an unbeliever. See Dt 24:1-4 for a biblical description of what God considers a divorce. Compare Mt 2:14-16.) **Fornication:** Or, “sexual immorality” (See 1 Co 6:18). This is a general term that refers to all sexual sins, including homosexuality, lesbianism, sodomy and adultery. **Adultery:** This word refers to the breaking of a contract or covenant by the unfaithfulness of one or both parties (Jr 3:8,9; 5:7; 9:2; Ez 16:31,32; 23:37; Hs 2:2,3; Js 4:4). It also refers to the illicit sexual actions of married persons with someone other than their mate. In the context here, reference is to the breaking of a marriage covenant.

OATHS

5:33-37 Will not make false oaths: See Lv 19:12; Nm 30:2; Dt 23:21. Making of oaths was a Sinai law to guarantee against dishonesty in the Jewish society. **Make no oath at all:** See Js 5:12. Jesus prohibits all swearing by oath as the Jews did, for they casually swore oaths by the city of Jerusalem, the earth and God. They casually made oaths, and then quickly broke them. The Jews were allowed to make vows and swear by the name of God (Dt 6:12; Is 65:16; Jr 4:2). However, Jesus is teaching here against the deceitful oath-making that was practiced by the Jews at the time. **God's throne:** See 23:22; Is 66:1; At 7:41. Reference is to the authority of kingdom reign that originates from God. **Yes:** The Christian

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should live such a character of life that whatever he says should be understood as truth (Js 5:12). If he makes a promise, it should be assumed that he will keep his promise. Christians should be good for their word.

LOVE OF ENEMIES

5:38,39 Eye for an eye: See Lk 6:29,30. The Jews twisted the teaching of the Sinai law on this matter (See Ex 21:23,24; Lv 24:20; Dt 19:21). In this text Jesus teaches against the concept of retaliation. The teaching of the preceding passages was in the context of the theocratic law of Israel. The "eye for an eye" was a civil law of the Sinai law where the people had the authority to punish offenders. **Do not resist:** Or, "Do not resist the one who is evil." Wrong that is committed against another originates from Satan (1 Jn 2:13,14; Rv 2:10). Disciples of Jesus must resist the temptations of Satan (Js 4:7). However, retaliation against those whom Satan uses to promote his work is not a Christian principle. **Whoever slaps you:** The slap here is an insulting blow (See 26:67; 1 Kg 22:24; Lm 3:30; Jn 18:22; 19:3; 2 Co 11:20). Whoever would so slap a Christian is allowing Satan to use him to persecute Christians.

5:40,41 Wants to sue you: It is better to suffer ill treatment than to resist or retaliate against those who would persecute you (1 Pt 2:18-20). **Compel you:** It was a Roman law that a government official could command into service any person or thing that was needed to carry a soldier's armor. Jesus' disciples are here commanded to willingly comply with those who would compel their services.

5:42-44 Give: The disciples should not retaliate by withholding from those who would ask of them (See Dt 15:8-10; Gl 6:10). They must willingly give when compelled by those who would demand of them according to law. **Love:** The Sinai law nowhere stated that one "hate his enemies." This was a false interpretation by the Jews (See Lv 19:17,18; Dt 23:3-6). Therefore, Jesus does not here argue against the Sinai law, but against those who falsely interpret it for their own desires. **Neighbor:** The principle of loving one's neighbor fulfills all that the law would command concerning one's duty toward his fellow man (See 22:35-40) **Love your enemies:** See 23:34; Lk 6:27,28; At 7:60. A true heart is not one of malice or hate. Hearts of malice and hate identify those individuals who are of the world. Luke adds here that we should do good to and pray for our enemies (Lk 6:27,28).

5:45,46 Children of your Father: The character that Jesus has just explained identifies those who are of the spirit of the Father, and thus, sons of the Father. God's love is impartial. He loved us when we were His enemies (See At 10:34,35; Rm 5:8; 1 Jn 4:10,11,19-21). **What reward:** There is no reward in a love that acts out of selfish motives to do something for others for the purpose of receiving something in return. True love must be unconditional. It must not seek a reward. **Tax collectors:** Or, "publican." These Jews worked as tax collectors for the Roman government, and thus, were despised by the Jews. They were allowed to take a portion of the taxes that they collected.

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5:47,48 Greet: If one embraces only those of his approval, then there is no true manifestation of love. The disciples' greetings must extend beyond what the world would do to and for itself. God's people are to be different in that they are disciples who unconditionally love others. They are expected by God to do more than those who are outside a covenant relationship with God. **Perfect:** Jesus establishes a needed high standard of conduct in order that His disciples be made aware of their need for salvation and their need to struggle in order to have the kingdom reign of Jesus within them (At 14:22). The word "perfect" here can refer only to one who is complete as a result of God's righteousness that comes through His grace. Christians are not perfect in behavior, but are perfect in Christ through the blood of Jesus (Cl 1:22,28; 4:12; Js 1:4,25; 3:2; Jd 24; see 1 Jn 1:1-7).

Chapter 6 SHARING

6:1-4 Deeds of righteousness: This is doing good to others. If one does good in order to receive the recognition of men, then he has received his reward. Christians let their light shine (5:16), but not for the purpose of drawing attention to themselves (Compare 23:5; 26:41; 1 Co 10:12). **When you do good deeds:** The Pharisees hypocritically sounded a trumpet when they gave to the poor in the streets. In drawing attention to their act of giving, they received all the reward they would receive. Christians should give in a manner by which they do not intentionally seek the praise of men. **In secret:** Christians should not give for public display. Their giving should be as private as possible in order that one's motives for giving be kept pure (See Rm 12:8).

PRAYER

6:5-8 Hypocrites: The Greek word here was used to refer to one who wore different masks in order to play different parts in a theatrical play. The hypocrites about whom Jesus spoke loved to pray in public places in order to be seen by men. Their prayers sounded good, but their hearts were far from God. Jesus does not condemn public prayer, but praying in order to be seen of men (See At 4:24-30). **Secret:** Disciples should pray often in a quiet environment in order to express their innermost feelings to the Father. **Meaningless:** This was the empty chanting over and over again of designated words that were customarily used in public prayers. Such memorized and repeated words of prayer became a monotonous public show of prayer. Prayer should not be a repetition of familiar words, phrases or a sermon to those who hear. Prayer should be in the words of the moment that express the feelings and thoughts of the individual or group who desires to call on God. The words of our prayers should express sincere thanksgiving to God (See Ph 4:6). **Your Father knows:** The omniscient God who hears our prayers knows our needs before we ask of Him (vs 32; see Mk 11:24).

6:9 After this manner: This prayer is a model of several things to

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be mentioned in prayer. Jesus is not giving a word system that is to be repeated as a prayer (Lk 11:1). The context here teaches against the repetitious use of the same words in prayer. **Our Father:** Prayer is to be directed to the Father (See Rm 8:14-16). **Hallowed:** Any prayer should contain that which would reverence and honor the Father (See Ex 20:7).

6:10 Kingdom come: At the time these instructions were given, the kingdom reign of Jesus had not yet come (16:18,19). The disciples were to pray that men accept the kingdom reign of Jesus in the sense that the will of the Father be done on earth as it is done in heaven. The kingdom reign is within one as he or she submits to the will of the Father (Lk 17:20,21). As the will of the Father is done in the hearts of men and women on earth as it is done in heaven, then the kingdom comes. Jesus here asks the disciples to pray that people accept the heavenly kingdom reign in order that they accept His kingship that was yet to come. Though the kingdom has already come in the hearts of many throughout the world today, there are still those places in the world where Jesus is not reigning in the hearts of people.

6:11-13 We must pray for those things that are necessary for the sustenance of life (1 Tm 6:7). **Forgive:** A necessary condition for the forgiveness of one's sins before God is that he have a spirit of forgiveness toward others (See vss 14,15; 18:21-35; Mk 11:25,26; Cl 3:13; Js 2:13). One of the characteristics of Christianity is that one have a forgiving spirit. **Do not lead us into temptation:** God does not tempt man (Js 1:13). Therefore, the plea here is that God keep one from being tempted beyond that which he is able to bear (See Lk 21:36; Jn 17:15; 1 Co 10:13; 2 Th 3:3; 2 Tm 4:18).

6:14,15 If you forgive: Having a forgiving spirit identifies one after the nature of God who forgives. If one cannot forgive his fellow man, then certainly he is not of the nature of God, and thus, not a candidate for heaven (18:35; Js 2:13).

FASTING

These are the first words Jesus delivers concerning the ministry of fasting (Lk 2:36,37). Fasting was a common part of the religious behavior of the Jewish culture, and thus, it is only natural that He would explain the nature of fasting in reference to the disciples' response to His lordship in their lives.

6:16 When you fast: It is not if the disciples would fast, but when they would fast. Fasting is an understood practice of the disciples of Jesus. Fasting is the natural response of those who respond with discipleship to the lordship of Jesus. It is the response of those who depend on God's work in their lives, for in fasting one is calling on God to respond to his pleas for help. **Fast:** Fasting is abstinence from food or water for the purpose of calling on God to respond to one's requests (Dt 9:17-19; 2 Sm 12:16,21; compare Is 58:3-7; Zc 8:19). Fasting is done in order to take one's mind off the physical needs of the body in order to concentrate on the spiritual needs of the inner self. Fasting is not a command, but that which disciples do in absence of the Bridegroom (See 9:14,15; At 13:1-3).

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Fasting not only strengthens our self-discipline, it also helps us to focus our attention on the work of God in our lives. **Disfigure:** The hypocritical Jews of Jesus' day often let their hair go uncut when they fasted over long periods. They would put ashes on their heads and show a disfigured face in order to be publicly identified to be in a fast. Their primary emphasis on the fasting, therefore, was not on a plea for God to work in their lives, but to manifest the meritorious performance of a religious rite. By fasting in such a manner, and for such purposes, the only reward they had for fasting was the praise of men.

6:17,18 Anoint your head and wash your face: It is not the desire of the disciples of Jesus to meritoriously fast, nor to fast in order to draw attention to one's performance of religious rites. Fasting is to be directed toward the inner self in order to focus one's mind on God. By concentrating on the inner spiritual part of man, Disciples should give no outward indication of their fasting. The purpose of fasting is to inwardly humble oneself before God in order to proclaim one's dependence on the work of God in his life (See 17:21; Mk 9:29; Lk 2:36,37; At 14:23; 1 Co 7:5; 2 Co 6:5; 11:27). In humbling ourselves before God, we manifest our dependence on God in order to plead for His work in our lives.

TREASURES IN HEAVEN

6:19-21 Treasures that we possess on earth can easily be consumed or taken from us (See Pv 23:5; Lk 12:21; 1 Tm 6:9,10). Because we know they can soon be taken from us, we worry about them. **Treasures in heaven:** By concentrating on those things that are above this earth, one places earthly things in the right perspective (10:21; Lk 12:33; 18:22; 1 Tm 6:19; 1 Pt 1:4; Cl 3:1-3). The crown of righteousness in heaven awaits those who have forsaken the treasures of the world (See 2 Tm 4:8). Here Jesus contrasts the physical and temporary things of this world (vs 19) with the eternal, spiritual things that will endure the destruction of the physical (See 2 Pt 3:10-12). If one has many things of this world, his thoughts, worry, and usually desires, will be focused on this world (Lk 12:34; Pv 4:23). If one's mind is on those things that are above, then his thoughts, desires and ambitions are on spiritual things (See Lk 11:34,35).

6:22-24 If the eye, that physical organ through which one perceives what is of the world, is corrupted with evil desire, then the whole of one's life will be headed toward destruction. However, if our perspective of life is focused on that which is good, then our whole life will be full of light. **Two masters:** It is impossible to focus one's life on service to the Master in heaven, and at the same time make material things the master of our lives (See Lk 16:13; Js 4:4). If one's focus is on the things of this world, then he cannot give himself to God in a way that God demands of His children. In other words, one cannot trust in his or her self-sufficiency of the things of the world and at the same time totally trust in God.

6:25-32 Do not be worried: One must not be overly anxious about the things of this world (Ps 55:22; Lk 10:41,42; 12:11; see Ph 4:6; 1 Pt 5:7). One must come to an understanding that life does not consist of those

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things that are empirically beheld and possessed (4:4). Jesus teaches that if God cares for the birds that put forth no effort to plant and reap crops, then surely He will take care of His children. **Cubit:** This Jewish measurement is about eighteen inches (about forty-six centimeters). No one even considers adding height to his stature. Jesus teaches that we should not be overly concerned about the sustenance of life. **Why are you worried:** Jesus' exhortation is that if God takes care of grass, flowers and birds, then surely He will take care of His children. The point is that one must trust in God, not in one's own self-sufficiency. **You of little faith:** In the context, these are those who are trusting in material things (See Rm 8:24; 2 Co 5:7).

6:33,34 Seek first the kingdom: Emphasis here again is that one desire that the will of the Father be done on earth in one's heart as it is done in heaven (See vss 9,10). God's righteousness comes through one's submission to His will. Seeking the kingdom of God, therefore, must always be first. God will take care of those who seek Him first. **Do not worry:** Jesus is not here condemning one's planning for the future. He is encouraging us not to be overly concerned about the future. In other words, we must not add worries about the future to the responsibilities of today. Worry works against faith (See Js 1:6). We must assume through faith that all things work together for good (Rm 8:28). And thus, we must work by faith (2 Co 5:17). The more one walks by faith, the less worry there is in his life.

Chapter 7

JUDGING OTHERS

7:1-5 Do not judge: See Lk 6:37-42. Jesus here teaches against the legalistic judging that was exercised by the Pharisees. Their self-righteous legal system of religiosity moved them to be critical of others who did not agree with them on every point of their systematic theology. Reference here is not to the right one has to form an opinion or to take notice of and help correct the wrong behavior of others (See Gl 6:1). One must always look at others with an attitude of love (See Jn 7:24; Rm 2:1; 14:3,4,10,13; 1 Co 4:3-5; Js 4:11,12). **You will be judged:** Legalism moves one to be critical and unmerciful in judgment concerning another's opinions (See comments intro. to Gl). God will severely judge those who harbor such attitudes toward one's fellow disciple (See 18:21-35). **Beam is in your own eye:** This hyperbole expresses the hypocritical error of the legalistic judge who considers his opinions as a standard of judgment while judging the beliefs of others according to his beliefs. His system of religion moves him to be judgmental of small matters in the lives of others who do not conform to his regimented beliefs, while at the same time he is not keeping the law perfectly. The legal system of judgment by which the faultfinder lives, makes it impossible for him to be an objective judge of others. **Remove the beam:** In order for one to correctly evaluate others, he must first recognize his own dysfunctional behavior (See Rm 2:21-23; Gl 6:1). One must live their life by the same standard by which they look at others (See comments 23:23-31).

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SEEKING GOD'S BLESSINGS

7:6 Do not give what is holy to the dogs: When the spiritual truths of love and mercy are extended toward the ruthless and hard-hearted, they are received with criticism and mockery (See 5:10-12). How one receives the truth determines his true nature. Once a vicious nature is discovered, then it is useless to offer opportunity by continual preaching and teaching the truth to the one who continually rejects it.

7:7,8 Ask ... seek ... knock: There is a progression here of one's intensity by which he seeks God's help. By faith one must seek God according to His will (1 Jn 5:14). As opposed to the self-righteous hearts of dogs who continually reject all righteousness, the humble-hearted must intensify their dependence on God for direction in life. God will provide (See 21:22; Mk 11:24; Lk 11:9-13; 18:1-8; Jn 14:13; 15:7; 15:23,24; Js 1:5,6; 1 Jn 3:22).

7:9-11 Jesus now illustrates the willingness of God to care for His children. **Stone:** An earthly father would not mock his son's request for help by giving a stone or a serpent. Neither would God do such a thing in the spiritual realm. It is the rule with God to answer prayer. How and when He answers is His choice. His wise answers are often not the answers we feel we should have. **Good things:** Luke says that God gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask (Lk 11:13). When this statement in Matthew is considered with Luke 11:13, both Matthew and Luke are stating that one receives the good things that result from the Holy Spirit.

7:12 Do also to them: This is often referred to as the Golden Rule (Lk 6:31). This is the principle of loving our neighbor as ourself (22:36-40; Gl 5:13,14). This is a fundamental principle of the discipleship that manifests one's relationship both with his fellow brother in Christ, as well as non-Christians. This is not a selfish motivation for being kind to others, but a mental check by which we can continually guard our behavior in relation to others. **Law and the prophets:** This fundamental principle is the foundation upon which is built all that God would have us do in our relationships with others (See 22:36-40; Lv 19:18; Rm 13:8-10; Gl 5:14).

7:13,14 Narrow gate: See Lk 13:24. Because the way requires humility that is combined with suffering and persecution, few will enter the gate into heaven (See At 14:22). **Wide ... gate:** Many will enter the gate to condemnation into hell since it is the way of indifference, self-righteousness, laziness and hypocrisy. The fact that Jesus here states that it is wide assumes that most people will be lost. Most people who live upon the face of the earth will choose not to obey God.

IDENTIFYING THE SOURCE OF FRUIT

7:15 False prophets: In the context, Jesus here points out the self-righteous and legalistic religious teachings of those to whom He came. Their misguided religiosity lends them to being blind religious guides (See 24:11,24; Dt 13:3; Jr 23:16; Ez 22:28; Mk 13:22; At 13:6; 20:29,30; 2 Co 11:1-13; 2 Th 2:1-12; 1 Tm 4:1-5; 2 Tm 2:17,18; 3:1-8; 4:1-5; 2 Pt 2:1; 3:1-7; 1 Jn 4:1-3; Rv 19:20; 20:10). **Sheep's clothing:** Jesus identifies these

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teachers as religious in nature and accepted by the religious community. However, the true nature of their teaching leads these religious people to depend on themselves for righteousness, and thus not seek the grace of God. They speak religious words, but their hypocritical character leads people away from God (See comments 23:13-31).

7:16 Fruits: See 12:33; Lk 6:44; Js 3:12. The moral life of the hypocritical religious teacher is not in harmony with that which he speaks (Mk 7:6-9). His self-righteous system of religion justifies his ungodly behavior while at the same time he preaches and teaches doctrine to others (See Lk 6:43-45). Thus the false prophet is identified more by his behavior than by his teachings.

7:17-20 By their fruits: As fruit inspectors, sons of God identify the false religious teacher by the conduct of his life. A tree with bad fruit is worthless in producing relationships that are acceptable to God. Religious leaders who are of such a nature will meet their destruction (See 3:10; Lk 13:7). It is the responsibility of Christians to judge the fruit of one's teaching. With the word of God, every man's teaching must be compared with what God says through His word. If one's teaching does not harmonize with the teaching of the word of God, then he will not produce fruit for God, but for himself or his man-made religion.

7:21 The legalistic false teachers of Israel will not submit to the kingdom reign of Jesus that was soon to be established. They cannot enter the kingdom simply because they are not of the nature of the kingdom, that is, the nature of those who submit to the kingdom reign of the Father. Such people would also not be able to enter heaven that is yet to come (See Lk 6:46; 13:25; At 19:13-15; Rm 2:13; 2 Th 1:7-9; Js 1:22).

7:22,23 That day: In the context of the ax being laid at the root of national Israel (3:10), reference here is to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. However, the same situation will also be at the end of time (10:15; Jn 12:48). Jesus identifies these zealous religious people as legally seeking God according to their works. They performed the right deeds, but their hearts were arrogant and self-righteous. God will reject the invented religiosity of those who presume to approach Him on their own terms (See Jn 14:15,23; 15:14; Cl 2:20-22; 3:16; 2 Jn 9,10). **Depart:** As God cast out of national Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem those who maintained a hypocritical religiosity, so He will also cast away those of such a religious nature when Jesus comes again (25:41; Lk 13:27).

7:24-27 These words of Mine: See Lk 6:47-49. One must humbly seek the grace of God, being cautious that he does not depend on his own performance of law and good works as the sole condition for his salvation. Compare 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9. **Does them:** See Js 1:22-25. One must be obedient to the words of Jesus (Jn 14:15; 15:14; 1 Jn 3:18). However, one does not obey in order to meritoriously justify himself before God. One obeys in response to the love of God (Rm 3:31; 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15; 1 Jn 4:19). **Rock:** The rock is the foundation of God's grace, not one's performance of law and good deeds. Any religious system that is not based on Jesus and His teachings will simply not stand in the end (See At 4:12).

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7:28,29 At the end of Jesus' discourse, the multitudes were amazed at the nature of His teaching (See 13:54; 22:33; Mk 1:22; 6:2; 11:18; Lk 4:32; Jn 7:46). He did not teach self-righteously as the scribes and Pharisees.

Authority: Jesus spoke with originality in the sense that His teaching came from Himself, not His quotation of the former religious leaders of Israel. He did not dwell on interpretations of the law or the proclamations of interpretation of the Jews' religious fathers. He did not rely on the distorted interpretations of the scribes and Pharisees. Because He was the Son of God, He spoke as the Son would speak. He spoke with divine authority.

Works Of The Christ

(8:1 – 10:42)

Outline: (1) Jesus heals the sick (8:1-4), (2) Healing of a Centurion's son (8:5-13), (3) Healing of Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-17), (4) Storm at sea (8:18-27), (5) Jesus heals a Gadarene demoniac (8:28-34), (6) Jesus heals a paralytic (9:1-8), (7) Call of Matthew to apostleship (9:9-13), (8) Fasting (9:14-17), (9) Healing of Jairus' daughter (9:18,19), (10) Healing a woman with an unhealed sore (9:20-22), (11) Raising Jairus' daughter (9:23-26), (12) Healing two blind men and a mute (9:27-34), (13) Need for laborers (9:35-38), (14) The twelve apostles (10:1-33), (15) The cost of discipleship (10:34-42)

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JESUS HEALS THE SICK

(Mk 1:40 – 2:12; Lk 5:12-16)

8:1-4 Leper: Leprosy is caused by a bacterium that attacks the nerves and skin. It causes the skin to swell and become lumpy and discolored. In the Jewish society, lepers were shunned by all according to the law (Ex 4:6; Lv 13; Nm 12:10; 2 Kg 5:27). This leper came before Jesus and humbly knelt down (Mk 1:40). He fell on his face before Jesus (Lk 5:12). He worshiped Jesus (2:11; 9:18; 15:25; 18:26; 20:20; Jn 9:38). **Immediately ... cleansed:** Herein are two definitions of a true miracle. The occurrence of a confirming miracle is instantaneous, and the effect of the miracle can be clearly seen by others. **Tell no one:** At this time in His ministry, Jesus did not want people coming to Him solely for the purpose of being healed. Much teaching needed to be done first (See 9:30; 12:16; 17:9; Mk 1:44; 3:12; 5:43; Lk 4:41; 9:21). However, regardless of Jesus' wishes, many went forth in their excitement and proclaimed what had happened in their lives (Lk 5:15,16; see Mk 6:19,20). **Show yourself:** According to the law, the leper needed confirmation by the priest that he was clean (Dt 24:8; Lv 13:49; 14:1-32). After he was declared clean, he could rejoin society.

HEALING OF A CENTURION'S SON

8:5-8 Centurion: This was a Roman military officer who was captain of one hundred men. This particular centurion came to Jesus. It is probable that the healing of the centurion's servant in Luke 7:1-10 was a different case than the one recorded here (See Lk 7:1-10). **Servant:** The Greek

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word used here literally means “young boy.” **Paralyzed:** The servant was suffering torment from cramps. We do not know what the particular sickness was. **I am not worthy:** Though the leader of one hundred men, this Roman officer expressed great humility. Such indicates at this time in Jesus’ ministry that His fame and work had spread to the highest levels of society. **Only speak the word:** The centurion believed in the power of Jesus to reach beyond His presence. He also knew that a Jew would be considered ceremonially unclean for entering a Gentile house.

8:9,10 Authority: The centurion recognized Jesus’ authority by spoken word because he had such authority himself. For this reason, he simply asked for a spoken word of authority in order that the young boy be healed. **Great faith:** His faith was great because as a Gentile he acted on his belief that Jesus could do something. Someone of his position could have sent one of his servants. But he humbly came to Jesus himself (See 15:22-28).

8:11,12 Many will come: Many Gentiles would come unto the kingdom reign of God (Ps 107:3; Is 49:12; 59:19; compare Gn 12:1-3; Is 2:2,3; 11:10; Mt 1:11; Jn 10:16; At 2:39-41; 11:18; 14:27). **Children of the kingdom:** The unbelieving Jews who were the sons of the kingdom by heritage would actually reject Jesus (Jn 1:11). Because they would reject Jesus, God would reject them (22:13; 25:30; 2 Pt 2:17; Jd 13). See comments 11:11; 21:43. **Weeping:** This is a figure of terror in realizing that one has lost something that is great. The Jews’ rejection of Jesus would lead to the death of over one million Jews in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and eventually, their eternal condemnation in hell at the end of time (See 13:42,50; 22:13; Lk 13:28).

8:13 His servant was healed: The great faith of the centurion resulted in the healing of his servant. The centurion’s faith was increased because he witnessed the miracle (9:29). The lesson is that if we depend on faith, faith will be increased.

HEALING OF PETER’S MOTHER-IN-LAW

8:14,15 Peter’s ... wife’s mother: See Mk 1:29-34; Lk 4:38,39. This is undeniable proof that Peter was married (See 1 Co 9:5). Mark records that Andrew, James and John were also present during this event. **Fever:** It was a great fever according to Luke, the physician (Lk 4:38). Nevertheless, she was instantly and completely healed, again confirming the nature of a true miracle of God.

8:16,17 Evening came: The healing of Peter’s wife’s mother happened on the Sabbath. The Jews’ first day of the week started on Saturday evening at 6:00^{PM}. Therefore, the people waited until after the Sabbath to be healed, lest they violate the interpretation of the Sabbath law that was imposed on them by the scribes and Pharisees. **Possessed with demons:** See comments 4:24. **With a word:** Jesus used no ceremonies or formulas to cast out demons. Since He had complete authority over all that Satan could command, He simply cast out demons by a statement. **Took our infirmities:** See Is 53:4; 1 Pt 2:24. Jesus took away both physi-

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cal infirmities and spiritual infirmities by physical and spiritual healing. By word of command, He healed the physically sick. By the cross, He healed the spiritually sick.

STORM AT SEA

(Mk 4:35-41; Lk 8:22-25)

8:18,19 A certain scribe: Before Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee, a lawyer of Jewish law, a scribe, came to Him. **I will follow:** This scribe had probably not yet counted the cost of discipleship.

8:20 While on earth, Jesus had no personal house or place to stay that He could call His own. **Son of Man:** Jesus is also called the Son of David (1:1), Son of Abraham (1:1), Son of God (16:16), Son of Adam (Lk 3:38), Son of Joseph (Lk 3:23) and Son of Mary (13:55). By referring to Himself as the Son of Man, Jesus was referring to Himself as the Messiah because the Jews used the term "Son of Man" to refer to the Messiah.

8:21,22 Bury my father: One of Jesus' disciples here feels his responsibility toward his father who was either dying or had just died (Lk 14:26,27). **Let the dead bury their own dead:** Jesus used physical death in this context to refer to spiritual death. What is in Jesus' mind is the spiritually dead. In other words, "Let the spiritually dead bury their own physically dead." Jesus was demanding total commitment on the part of the disciples to the work of the kingdom (10:37; Lk 9:23,61,62; 14:25-35). Nothing must come between themselves and the work to which God would commission them. The disciple's destiny must not be diverted.

8:23,24 He entered into a boat: After a weary day, Jesus withdrew from the crowds in order to rest. **Great storm:** Though there was an impending great storm (Mk 4:37), Jesus fell asleep (Mk 4:38). Such storms were common on the Sea of Galilee. The Sea was surrounded by mountains. The level of the Sea was about 180 meters (about 600 feet) below sea level.

8:25-27 Lord, save us: Mark records that the disciples said, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" (Mk 4:38) The disciples wondered why He could sleep in the midst of such a storm. But Jesus was unconcerned with the storm, for He knew He could control the elements of nature (Mk 5:1-17; Lk 8:26-37). **He ... rebuked the winds and the sea:** Jesus first rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith (14:22-36). He then rebuked the winds and sea (Mk 4:39). The event thus manifested Jesus' control over the environment of the supernatural in order to control the environment of man (Compare comments Cl 1:16). **What kind of man is this:** See Ps 89:9; 93:4. Jesus was moving the disciples to a confession of who He was. This confession would come in chapter 16:13-20. True miracles are not subjectively defined, but empirically witnessed through the senses of men. They are instantaneous in occurrence, and thus, cannot be denied.

JESUS HEALS A GADARENE DEMONIAIC

(Mk 5:1-20; Lk 8:26-39)

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8:28,29 Gadarenes: This was a Gentile area on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee (Mk 5:1; Lk 8:26). **Two demon-possessed men:** Both Mark and Luke record the actions of only one of the demoniacs. He was possibly the more outspoken of the two, and thus, was emphasized by Mark and Luke. See comments 4:24. **What have we to do with You:** More than one demon addressed Jesus. They recognized Jesus as the Son of God. **Before the time:** The demons, as well as Satan, know their destiny (25:41; At 16:16,17; Js 2:19; 2 Pt 2:4; Jd 6). Their destiny is the Abyss, and finally, the destruction of gehenna (25:41; Lk 8:32). The demons know that Jesus has absolute power over them.

8:30-32 The demons begged Him: The demons asked permission of Jesus, thus indicating that there is no comparison of power between the Son of God and the forces of Satan. This manifestation of the demons' attitude toward Jesus gives us the reason why God allowed demons to possess people in the 1st century. Demon possession was for the purpose of manifesting Jesus' absolute power over the realm of Satan and his work. **Herd of swine:** Spirits seek embodiment. These demons would take the bodies of swine over being disembodied. There were about two thousand swine feeding on the side of the mountain (Mk 5:11-13). The demons thus asked Jesus' permission to indwell the swine instead of being sent into the Abyss.

8:33,34 The possession of the swine by the demons drove the swine senseless. They thus rushed into the sea and drowned. When God allows Satan to control a situation, only destruction occurs (See Jb 1:12-22). **They begged Him that He depart:** This is certainly a sad legacy of a people who had given up godliness. They were more concerned about pigs than people. They asked Jesus to leave. They were afraid of the unknown, and because of their fear, these people asked the Son of God to leave their presence (Lk 8:36,37). They were more concerned over their situation than over the two demoniacs who had been healed. One of the men who was possessed was commanded by Jesus to tell others what God had done for him. He thus went throughout the region proclaiming to all what Jesus had done for him (See Lk 8:39; Mk 5:20).

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JESUS HEALS A PARALYTIC

(Mk 2:1-12; Lk 5:17-26)

9:1-4 His own city: This was the city of Capernaum (4:13; Mk 2:1). **Paralytic:** This paralytic could not walk. Four of his friends thus brought him to Jesus on a bed. Since they were unable to get to Jesus through the crowd, they let him down on his bed through the roof. **Your sins are forgiven:** In this case, Jesus dealt first with that which was most important. He obviously does this in order to generate a controversy with the scribes who were also present. Compare Mk 2:5,9; Lk 5:20,23; 7:48; 23:43. **This Man blasphemes:** The scribes and Pharisees (Lk 5:21) thought it blasphemy to assume the position of God by forgiving sins (See Jn 10:31-36; Lv 24:15,16). They were right. Only God can forgive sins, for sin is

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against God. However, the opposite is taking place here. Blasphemy is assigning that which is of God to be of the Devil. This is exactly what they were doing. They were assigning the work of Jesus to the Devil. **Knowing their thoughts:** See 12:25; Ps 139:2; Lk 6:8; 9:47; 11:17. Jesus knew the thoughts and hearts of men (Jn 2:24,25). He has thus worked this situation in order to reveal the evil thoughts and hearts of the scribes and Pharisees.

9:5-8 Which is easier: The conclusion to the question is that the one who had the power to forgive sins, would also have the power to heal the sick. Both were possible with God, but impossible with men. If Jesus could heal, then certainly He had the authority to forgive sins. Only Jesus could do both, and thus Jesus was God in their presence. No one today has the power to forgive sins, for no one today is in the position of Jesus as the Son of God. **Authority on earth to forgive sins:** The fact that Jesus could command the paralytic to be healed was proof of His messiahship, sonship, and thus, His authority to forgive sins (See Jn 3:2; 20:30,31; At 2:22). **They feared:** The multitudes who witnessed this miracle were filled with fear (Lk 5:26). They were convinced that God had given to Jesus the power to heal. They had never before seen anything as this (Mk 2:12; Lk 5:26).

CALL OF MATTHEW TO APOSTLESHIP

(Mk 2:13-17; Lk 5:27-32)

9:9 Matthew: This Matthew, or Levi, is the inspired writer of the book. He was a tax collector (publican) (Mk 2:14). He would later be an apostle of Jesus. **Tax office:** He was sitting on the high platform where taxes were collected. Tax collectors were given a portion from the taxes they collected, and thus, they often collected taxes dishonestly by taking advantage of their office by overtaxing the people (See 10:3; Lk 6:15; Mk 3:18; At 1:13). Some Jews considered them traitors to Israel, for as Jews they worked for the Roman government. **Follow me:** Before his call, Matthew was surely acquainted with Jesus and His teachings. This would explain the immediate response of Matthew to Jesus' call to follow Him (8:22). He could have been a disciple of John the Baptist before knowing Jesus (see At 1:21,22). Since Jesus was considered a Rabbi by the people, it was a special privilege to be called by a Rabbi to be His disciple.

9:10,11 At the table in the house: After deciding to follow Jesus, Matthew gave a party in his house in order to invite his acquaintances to hear what Jesus taught (Mk 2:15; Lk 5:29). **Eat with tax collectors and sinners:** One concept the Pharisees had of the Messiah was that He would not sit in the presence of those who were considered dishonest and the outcast of society, and especially those who were considered traitors to national Israel. Tax collectors, and those the Pharisees considered sinners, were not those with whom they thought Jesus, if He were the Messiah, should socialize. Compare 11:19; Mk 2:16; Lk 5:30; 15:2.

9:12,13 Those who are sick: It was the Pharisees who considered tax collectors, and the ones they identified as sinners, to be sick. Jesus used a proverbial saying here in order to answer the Pharisees' accusa-

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tion that He was with the sinners. They would certainly agree that if such people were sinners, then He as the physician should be with them (See Mk 2:17; Lk 5:31). ***I desire mercy and not sacrifice:*** This is a quote from the Greek Septuagint translation of Hosea 6:6 (See 1 Sm 15:22). Sacrifice was a command of God. However, the greater law of mercy must be exercised in order to bring sinners to righteousness (See comments 23:23,24). The legalistic approach to religious matters that was exercised by the Pharisees made it difficult for them to understand this principle of God. ***I did not come to call the righteous:*** This was an ironical statement that was applicable to the Pharisees who thought that they needed no repentance. They were legalistically righteous in their own eyes. However, in reality they needed to repent just as the ones they considered to be the vilest of sinners. Those who mourned over their sins are called to repentance (5:4). Those who do not recognize that they are sinners will not repent. Jesus knew that the faithful of Israel would accept Him as the Messiah. It was the unfaithful, those who were not of the faith of Abraham, whom He sought to call to repentance (See Rm 3:23; 1 Tm 1:15; see comments Rm 4).

FASTING

(Mk 2:18-22; Lk 5:33-39)

9:14 According to the record of Mark and Luke, this question comes from the scribes and Pharisees (Lk 5:30). They asked why the disciples of John the Baptist and the disciples of the Pharisees fast and pray often and Jesus had not taught His disciples to do the same (Mk 2:18). The complaint is made to Jesus. ***Your disciples do not fast:*** These events took place at a time of fasting when the disciples of the Pharisees and John's disciples were fasting and praying (Mk 2:18; Lk 5:33). ***Disciples:*** Both the Pharisees and John had disciples. The term "disciple" is simply a term that is used to refer to one who was an apprentice, and thus, a follower and learner of the one to whom the apprentice has given allegiance to be his teacher. In this context, the disciples of John had learned from him that they should fast.

9:15 Jesus answered the disciples of John by stating that it is not the time to fast when the bridegroom is present. Mark records, "As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast" (Mk 2:19). However, there would be a time when the bridegroom leaves. It will be in that time that His disciples would fast. ***Then they will fast:*** The companions (sons) of the bridegroom did not have to fast while the bridegroom was still in their presence. Jesus is describing Himself as the bridegroom. The time to fast will be when He goes away. In Jesus' situation, He was taken away at the cross in order to reign at the right hand of God. Since Jesus as the bridegroom has left, it is now the time for the disciples of Jesus to fast (See At 13:1-3; 1 Co 7:5). Jesus thus assumed that after His death and ascension, His disciples would fast. Those who are disciples of Jesus in this present age are therefore fasting. They will have fastings until the bridegroom (Jesus) comes for the bride (the church).

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9:16,17 *An old garment:* One does not stitch a piece of new cloth that has not had time to shrink on to old clothes. If one does, the new piece will shrink and tear away from the old that has already shrunk. Jesus is saying that the new ways of His teachings cannot be patched to either Jewish traditions or the Sinai law. Both must be taken away in order to make room for the new covenant and law (Cl 2:14; Rm 7:1-4; Hb 10:9,10). ***New wineskins:*** These were animal skins that were used to bottle liquids. New wine would ferment, expand, and thus, burst the old wineskins that were already brittle. Jesus did not pour His teachings of new wine into the old wineskins of Jewish traditions or any other teaching. Jesus is here preparing the people to accept Him as the one through whom the Father will communicate all truth (Hb 1:1,2). What He would teach would be the standard by which everyone would be judged (Jn 12:48).

HEALING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

(Mk 5:21-24; Lk 8:40-42)

9:18,19 A great multitude was now following Jesus (Mk 5:21). ***A certain ruler:*** Or, "magistrate." Jairus was one of the rulers of a local synagogue (Mk 5:22) who had only one daughter of about twelve years of age (Lk 8:42). ***Worshiped Him:*** Jairus knew that Jesus was more than a teacher of Israel and a prophet (8:2). The multitudes crowded around Jesus as the man begged Him to come to his house and heal the girl. Without questioning, Jesus went with Jairus. It was now the time in His ministry to resurrect someone from the dead.

HEALING A WOMAN WITH FLOW OF BLOOD

(Mk 5:25-34; Lk 8:43-48)

9:20-22 *A woman:* This woman had spent all she had on doctors who could not make her well (Mk 5:26). ***Hemorrhage of blood:*** This problem could have been in relation to an open sore that would not heal. It could also have been a chronic menstrual disorder that would make her unclean according to the Sinai law (Lv 15:25). ***Touched:*** She reasoned that if she could only touch the tassel or fringe of Jesus' robe, then she would be healed (Mk 5:28). Her faith in the fact that Jesus could heal, moved her to reach forth and touch His clothing. Therefore, as a result of her faith, she was immediately healed when she touched the garment of Jesus (Mk 5:29). Mark and Luke record that Jesus insisted on being told who touched Him. The woman subsequently came forward in fear and trembling (Mk 5:33). ***Your faith:*** Faith was not the condition upon which she was healed, but the motivating factor that drove her to touch Jesus. Her faith motivated her to overcome all obstacles in order to reach out and touch the One who could heal her (See Lk 7:50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42).

RAISING JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

(Mk 5:35-43; Lk 8:49-56)

9:23,24 While Jesus was involved in the events concerning the healing of the woman, news came that Jairus' daughter had died (Mk 5:35). When

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Jesus arrived at the house, He allowed only Peter, James and John (the brother of James) to follow Him into Jairus' house (Mk 5:37). **Flute players:** It was a custom to hire musicians and professional mourners to wail over the death of a person (See Jr 9:17; 16:6; Ez 24:17; Am 5:16). **The maid ... sleeps:** In the eyes of God, the death of the righteous is only a sleep, for they will rise from the dead. In the situation here, the One who has the power to resurrect can change into life what may seem terminal to man. The people scorned at the statement of Jesus, for they knew that the young girl was actually dead (Compare Jn 11:13; At 20:10).

9:25,26 When Jesus took the girl by the hand, He commanded her to arise (Mk 5:41; Lk 8:54). Both Mark and Luke record that Jesus did not want this miracle to be made known. The reason He did not was that such would excite the crowds to ask Jesus to heal their friends instead of listening to His teaching. Nevertheless, the resurrection of the girl was proclaimed throughout the region (See 4:24; 14:1; Mk 1:28,45; Lk 5:15; 7:17). It is evident from Jesus' instructions here that He did not want this miracle reported because He did not work miracles in order to draw crowds. His teaching and the repentance of the people had priority over the miracles. When people focus on miracles they sometimes lose focus of themselves.

HEALING TWO BLIND MEN & A MUTE

9:27-29 Son of David: The two blind men recognized that Jesus was the Messiah. They followed Jesus and cried out for healing (Compare 12:23; 15:22; 20:31; 21:9,15; 22:44,45; see Is 35:5). **Do you believe:** Their faith led them to follow Jesus into the house in which He was staying in Capernaum. Their faith was not a condition for healing, but evidence that they believed He was the Messiah, the Son of David. Their belief that Jesus was the Messiah led them to believe that as the Messiah, He could heal them. **According to your faith:** They were healed according to their faith that Jesus as the Messiah could heal them (See vs 22; 8:13).

9:30-32 True miracles happened instantaneously. **See that no one knows about this:** Early in the ministry of Jesus, He wanted to do much teaching and preaching. If people knew of the healing, they would throng Him for such without listening to what He had to say (See 8:4; Mk 5:43). **Spread the news:** The two men who were healed probably thought that the only way they could thank Jesus was to tell others what He had done for them (4:24; 14:1). **Mute man:** As the two blind men went out of the house, a man who could not speak and was demon possessed was brought to Jesus (11:5; Mk 7:32; Lk 7:22). **Possessed:** See comments 4:24.

9:33,34 Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel: No demon had ever been cast out before in Israel. The proof that exorcists and witches had no power to cast out demons is seen in the fact that no one had witnessed demons being cast out before Jesus. The Pharisees who witnessed the casting out of the demon did not deny that the demon had been cast out (See At 4:16). They simply affirmed that what Jesus had done was of the Devil. Such was blasphemy. **Ruler of the demons:**

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This is Satan (12:24-32). Jesus' work was either from God or Satan. The Pharisees here assign Jesus' work to Satan. They were thus saying that Jesus was of Satan, which was truly blasphemy (See 12:24; Mk 3:22; Lk 11:15; compare Jn 7:20ff; At 5:39).

NEED FOR LABORERS

9:35,36 It was the work of Jesus to go about teaching and preaching. He did not stay in one village, but went to all He could physically go during His ministry. **Every kind of sickness:** Emphasis is on healing every kind of sickness and disease. No physical sickness was too difficult for Him to heal. **Moved with compassion:** Jesus was sympathetic for the physical needs of the people (See 14:14; Mk 1:41; 6:34). **Sheep having no shepherd:** The multitudes had no spiritual leader who would guide them unto the truth of God (See Mk 6:34; compare Nm 27:17; 1 Kg 22:17; Ez 34:5). Those religious leaders who were in their presence were only leading the people away from God through their traditions (See comments Mk 7:1-9).

9:37,38 The harvest: The people were being blindly led by legalistic teachers whose ambition it was to maintain their own positions and power over the people. There were few among the people who were spiritually leading the people according to the grace and love of God (See Lk 10:2; Jn 4:35). It is always the case that there are too few laborers for the need of harvesting. Christians live in a world where much preaching of the gospel must be accomplished in every nation of the world. The problem is usually that the harvesters are diverted from the harvest to use their talents on things other than preaching the gospel to the lost. However, we must keep in mind that when one has heard the gospel once, then we must move on to those who have not heard it for the first time. **Pray:** One of the commands Jesus gave concerning prayer was that we express pleas for more evangelists to carry forth the good news to the people. It is the duty of every disciple of Jesus, therefore, to pray for more messengers to proclaim the gospel to the lost (2 Th 3:1).

Chapter 10

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

(Mk 6:7-13; Lk 9:1-6)

10:1 Jesus had chosen the twelve apostles by this time in His ministry (Lk 6:13-16). **Gave them authority:** Jesus here gives the twelve the privilege to unleash the power of the supernatural in order to work miracles in the lives of men. They received this power before the events of Acts 2 when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit (At 2:1-5). He is here giving them this power in order to send them forth on preaching tours during His earthly ministry.

10:2-6 See Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16; At 1:13. Compare 1 Co 15:5,9; Ep 2:20. **Sent out:** This was one of many limited commissions Jesus gave to the twelve apostles (Mk 6:7; Lk 9:2). They were not to go at this time to the Gentiles or Samaritans (15:24; Jn 4:9). They were to go only to the Jewish towns. After Jesus' ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit

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on the apostles in Acts 2, they would go into all nations (28:19; Mk 16:15). One must keep in mind that Jesus sent the disciples out on many preaching tours during His ministry in order to prepare the way for the cross and establishment of His kingdom reign. The records of both Mark and Luke contain accounts of other tours, though some of the facts of those tours are similar to those given here by Matthew.

10:7,8 Kingdom of heaven is at hand: See 3:2; 4:17; Lk 10:9. Jesus' kingdom reign was about to be established. Reference here is not to some supposed earthly kingdom that would come in the future. Jesus never intended to set up an earthly kingdom reign. Through His preaching and the preaching of the twelve, He was preparing Israel for His kingdom reign from heaven that would be the fulfillment of prophecy (See Dn 2:44; 7:13,14). **Demons:** See comments 4:24. **Freely give:** Herein is a principle of discipleship. In the context, reference was to their freely receiving the power to heal the sick. They were not to heal for money. They were to use the free gift of healing in a generous manner. After their empowerment with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, they would remember this principle, and thus, freely impart the miraculous gifts to all by the laying on of their hands (See comments At 8:18). However, the principle of freely giving as one freely receives permeates the behavior of true disciples. God has freely given His grace. We should freely proclaim it to others.

10:9,10 They were to take no extra possessions that would burden their trip. They were to take only the clothes they wore and one staff (Mk 6:8). In other words, Jesus wanted them to go as quickly as possible to proclaim the message that the Messiah had arrived. In doing so, they must depend on God to take care of them. **Worker is worthy of his food:** Those who minister spiritual things are worthy of physical things. The preacher of the gospel to the lost must be paid. This has always been a principle among God's people (See Lk 10:7; 1 Co 9; Gl 6:6; 1 Tm 5:17,18). Brethren who do not support those who teach in all good things are not obeying the will of God in this matter (See comments 3 Jn 1-8).

10:11-13 They were not to lodge from house to house in the towns and cities unto which they went in order not to appear as men seeking material blessings. They were to stay in one house. **Greet it:** See Lk 10:5-8. **Peace:** See Lk 10:5. Emphasis in these directives was based on the thought that the household that received the messengers was in agreement with the message of the messengers.

10:14,15 Shake off the dust: This was a Jewish custom that manifested to the inhospitable their lack of hospitality and acceptance of the messenger and his message (See Ne 5:13; Lk 10:10,11; At 13:51). In this case, those who would receive the messengers of Jesus were receiving Jesus (See 12:41; Jn 15:18-27). **Day of judgment:** If they did not receive Jesus and what He taught, they would be rejected in the judgment of God on national Israel (See 11:22-24; 24:12,13; At 17:31; 2 Co 5:10; 2 Pt 2:9; 3:7,8). In view of the statements in verses 16 through 23, the context would refer to the disciples' work unto the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The day of judgment, therefore, would refer to the judgment of God

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in time on Jerusalem (See comments of ch 24; Dn 2 & 7). **Sodom and Gomorrah:** See Gn 19; Jd 7.

10:16 Wise as serpents: In these areas the serpent was symbolic of prudence, cunning and wisdom. The disciples are to exercise great wisdom in their work for the Master (See 2 Co 12:16; Ep 5:15; Cl 4:5). **Harmless as doves:** The dove was symbolic of peace, innocence and purity. In venturing into the dangers of their journey, the disciples must maintain their innocence in an environment of evil. In order to do such, they must exercise great wisdom on their journey (See Ep 5:15; Ph 2:14-16).

10:17,18 In this and the following verses, Jesus looks beyond the limited commissions that occurred during His ministry. He envisions the persecution the twelve apostles would endure throughout their lifetime (See 23:34; At 5:18,40; 9:16; 12:1; 22:19; 26:11). **Testimony to them:** The arrests and trials before councils would give them an opportunity to preach to the Gentiles and government officials (See At 23; 26).

10:19-21 What you should speak: This message is given directly to the apostles, for it signifies inspiration by the Holy Spirit (See Mk 13:11; Lk 12:11,12; 21:14,15; Jn 14:26; 16:13,14; At 4:8; 13:9; compare Ex 4:12; Jr 1:7). **Brother will deliver up brother:** Jesus changes in the discourse to the third person. He thus states that not only would the apostles receive persecution, but persecution would also be waged against all the disciples of Jesus (At 14:22). In this case, loyalty to earthly things will outweigh loyalty to either family or faith. There will be great betrayal within family relationships during times of persecution (See vs 34-36; Mc 7:6; Lk 21:16).

10:22,23 Jesus now turns to discussing specifically the case of the apostles. He warns them that all groups of people will persecute them (24:9; Lk 21:17; Jn 15:18). **He who endures:** Regardless of persecution, they must remain faithful even if it means death (24:13; Mk 13:13; 1 Co 13:7; Rv 2:10; 3:11). **Flee to another:** The disciples were not cowards. However, they must flee persecution in order to spare their own lives for another day and occasion for preaching. **Until the Son of Man comes:** Since the context is talking about the ministry of the disciples throughout their lives, emphasis here is to the coming of the Son of God in time in judgment upon the Jewish State in A.D. 70.

10:24-26 A disciple is not above his teacher: It was a Jewish custom of respect that the teacher must be considered with greater respect than the student (Lk 6:40; Jn 15:20). Jesus here teaches that if the teacher suffers insult and persecution, then surely His disciples will suffer the same (Jn 13:16; 15:20). **Beelzebul:** Or, Baalzebub. This was the Philistine god who was lord of the flies (2 Kg 1:2,3). Compare 10:25; 12:24-26; Mk 3:22; Lk 11:15,18,19 where Beelzebul is called the prince of demons. **Those of his household:** Jesus forewarns the disciples that they as His disciples are headed for persecution. **Do not fear:** Because of their faith, Christians are not cowards (Lk 12:2-9; see Rm 8:31,37; Ph 4:13). **Revealed:** Those misguided religious people who are after the nature of Beelzebul will self-righteously persecute the disciples of Jesus. However, when the

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consummation of national Israel comes in A.D. 70, the truth that God was with the disciples would be manifested. The persecuting Jews would be openly manifested to no longer be God's people (Compare Lk 8:17; 12:2,3; 1 Co 4:5).

10:27,28 *Speak in the light:* What Jesus taught them privately, they must boldly speak publicly (At 5:20; Rm 1:16; 16:25). ***Do not fear:*** Jesus instructs the disciples not to fear those who are able to kill the physical body. They must remember that they cannot destroy the soul (Lk 12:4; 1 Pt 3:14). They must fear God (Is 8:13; Lk 12:5; Hb 10:31). Their fear of God must overshadow their fear for their lives. ***Able to destroy both soul and body in hell:*** Reference here is to gehenna, the final destruction of the wicked (25:41; 2 Th 1:7-9). Jesus would not have made this statement if it were not true. After just punishment has been meted out to the wicked, God will annihilate both the soul and the body of the wicked in the end. If He could not, then Jesus would never have made this statement. We must not assume that He made this statement as a passing thought that was not going to happen. The fact that He made the statement is evidence that such will happen to the wicked after their resurrection in the end and just punishment for their sin.

10:29-31 The question that Jesus asks here demands an affirmative answer. Though sparrows are insignificant in comparison to man, God notices and cares for them. Certainly He will care for the righteous (See 6:25-30; Rm 8:31-39). ***Farthing:*** The Greek word here is *assarion* which was about one sixteenth of a denarius.

10:32,33 *Confess Me before men:* In this context, reference is to the disciple's living behavior that proclaims him to be a disciple of Jesus. Those who bravely live for Jesus on earth have their names confessed before God and written in the book of life (Ph 4:3; Rv 20:15; 21:27; see 10:21; Lk 12:8,49-53; Rv 3:5; compare 16:17,18; Rm 10:9,10; 1 Tm 6:12,13). ***Deny Me before men:*** One denies Jesus by not living according to the standards of the One after whom he calls himself (See Lk 9:26; Jn 12:42; 2 Tm 2:12).

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

10:34-37 The statements that Jesus makes here must be considered a part of the instructions of verses 1-33. He gives the disciples instructions concerning the limited commission and their ministry in general. ***Sword:*** Though Jesus is the Prince of peace, the message that He brought would divide the righteous from the unrighteous (Lk 12:49). His message would cause great tension between those who want to do right and those who want to continue to walk in darkness (See Mc 7:6). He is again emphasizing the persecution that the wicked would bring on His disciples. Families would be divided when one member would obey the gospel and the other would not. ***Is not worthy of Me:*** Jesus called on His disciples to follow Him even if the wishes of their fathers or mothers were contrary to the will of God. One's relationship with God is far more important than his or her relationship with his or her family on earth. This passage explains Luke's

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use of the word "hate" in reference to the disciples' allegiance to Jesus over family (See Lk 14:26; compare the example of Gn 29:31).

10:38,39 See 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23; 14:27. **Cross:** As the condemned person had to bear his own cross to his own crucifixion, so Jesus affirmed that His disciples must bear their own crosses of persecution in their ministry of His will. **Finds his life:** The one who would deny Jesus in order to save his life will lose his own soul. However, he who would stand firm in the face of persecution and death will receive eternal life in the end (16:25; Lk 9:24; 17:33; Jn 12:25; Rv 2:10).

10:40-42 He who receives you: See verse 14; 12:41; 25:35-40,42-45; Lk 9:48; Jn 12:44. Compare Ja 2:8-22; 1 Kg 17:10; 18:3,4; Hb 11:31. **Receives:** Those who accept the disciples into fellowship by accepting their teaching are actually receiving Jesus and His teachings (See Jn 13:20; At 16:15; Gl 4:14; 2 Jn 9; compare 1 Kg 17:10; 2 Kg 4:8). **Reward:** See 25:40; Mk 9:41; Hb 6:10. Those who receive Jesus will receive the reward one receives for receiving a prophet or righteous man (Mk 9:41). Receiving Jesus is more than acknowledging Him to be the Son of God. Receiving means obedience to His will. In order to receive Jesus, therefore, one must obey the gospel of Jesus by immersion for remission of sins (See comments Rm 6:3-5; 1 Co 15:1-4).

Ministry Of The Christ

(11:1-13:53)

Outline: (1) Messengers from John (11:1-19), (2) Woe unto the cities (11:20-24), (3) Prayer of thanksgiving (11:25-30), (4) The Sabbath controversy (12:1-14), (5) Jesus heals many diseases (12:15-21), (6) Accusations concerning Beelzebul (12:22-37), (7) Seeking for signs (12:38-45), (8) Jesus' mother and brothers (12:46-50), (9) Beside the sea (13:1-2), (10) Parable of the soils (13:3-9), (11) Purpose of the parables (13:10-17), (12) Explaining the parable of the sower (13:18-23), (13) Parable of the tares (13:24-30), (14) Parable of the mustard seed (13:31,32), (15) Parable of the leaven (13:33-35), (16) Explanation of the tares (13:36-43), (17) Parable of the hidden treasure (13:44), (18) Parable of the pearl (13:45,46), (19) Parable of the dragnet (13:47-50), (20) Summation of the parables (13:51,52)

Chapter 11

MESSENGERS FROM JOHN

(Lk 7:18-35)

11:1 This verse actually concludes the charge to the disciples concerning their ministry and teaching that Jesus delivered in chapter 10 (Mk 6:12,13; Lk 9:6). The assumption here is that the disciples then went forth preaching and healing the sick. Jesus, however, went on to preach and teach in other cities (9:35; Lk 23:5).

11:2,3 John ... in prison: John the Baptist had been cast into prison by Herod because he preached against Herod's unlawful living with his brother's wife, Herodias (Lk 3:19,20; Mk 6:17,18). Herod was related to

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Herodias, for Herodias was his sister-in-law. He was, according to the law, living in incest. **Are You the One who is to come:** John wanted to know for sure if Jesus was the Messiah (See Gn 49:10; Nm 24:17; Dn 9:24; Jn 6:14). John knew that Jesus was the Messiah (Jn 1:29; 3:27-36). However, John was possibly despondent while in prison and just wanted reassurance that Jesus was the Messiah. On the other hand, John may have known that his end was near. He thus sent his disciples to Jesus in order to turn their interest toward Jesus. At this time in His ministry, Jesus did not want to proclaim openly His messiahship lest He be tried and condemned before He had accomplished His work of teaching. Therefore, He presented His miraculous works to John's disciples as proof of His messiahship (See Jn 3:2).

11:4,5 Luke records that when the disciples of John made the inquiry, Jesus worked many miracles. Jesus' answer to John, therefore, was the works that He did. **Poor:** One of the characteristics of the work of the Messiah was that He would preach to the poor (Is 29:18,19; 35:4-6; 61:1). One of the characteristics of the true disciples of Jesus, therefore, was to follow this example. **Dead are raised up:** No false prophet could raise the dead or heal the sick. God does not allow Satan to work miracles. If He did, then Jesus' proof of His messiahship here would mean nothing. However, Jesus' miracles will always stand as proof that He was more than a man (Jn 3:2; 20:30,31; At 2:22). His miracles will always stand proof that God has never allowed Satan to work miracles in order to cancel the witnessing effect of the miracles of God's messengers.

11:6-8 John and others were not to lose faith or be ashamed because of the humble life Jesus lived as the Messiah (Is 8:14,15; 53; Rm 9:32; 1 Pt 2:8). Jesus came to restore spiritual life to those who were hopeless in spiritual death. He came to encourage those who have nothing of this world as to how they can be rich in faith (Js 1:9). Compare 13:21,57; 16:23; Jn 6:61; 16:1. **What did you go out ... to see:** In Jesus' tribute to John, He proclaimed that John was not a vacillating or unstable reed blown by the wind (Ep 4:14). John was a strong personality who was able to live in the desert and stand firm for what he believed. John was not a man dressed for the rich and luxurious life of those who lived in a worldly manner. He was not a graduate of the schools of higher learning in the cities, nor a dweller of suburban Jerusalem. He lived a rural life-style that demanded faith on the part of those who would go out to hear and obey his message.

11:9-11 More than a prophet: See 14:5; 21:26; Lk 1:76; 20:6. John's coming was specifically foretold (Ml 3:1). He was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Lk 1:15). In other words, as the special messenger of God who was prophesied in Malachi 3:1, he was born for a specific purpose that was determined by God over four hundred years before his birth. His calling to be the forerunner for the Son of God made him more than the ordinary prophets of God. **Born of women:** See this idiom in Job 14:1; 15:14; 25:4. **The Baptist:** Literally, this would be translated "the immerser." He was "John, the immerser." John was called such because he

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immersed people. **Least in the kingdom:** God's kingdom reign over all things has always existed (See 1 Ch 29:11). It was in existence at the time Jesus made these statements concerning John. Therefore, John was a subject of this kingdom (See 5:10,17-19; 8:11,12; 21:43; Ps 10:16; 22:28; 24:10; 44:4; 103:19; Dn 4:3,34; 6:26; 1 Ch 29:9-11; 1 Tm 1:17). However, John was not in the church of Christ. The church and the kingdom reign of Christ are two different realms of God's relationship with man. Kingdom refers to God's rule from heaven over all things. Church refers to man's response on earth. The response to the kingdom reign of Jesus that was announced on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 led to the submission of men on earth. This was after John had already died. The church started in Acts 2 as a result of the first official announcement by Peter of the existing kingdom reign of Jesus that was in existence by the Pentecost of Acts 2 (See comments 16:18,19). Those who are now subjects to the kingdom reign of Jesus know more about the kingdom of Jesus than John (See comments At 2).

11:12 The kingdom of heaven suffers violence: This is undeniable proof that John was in the kingdom of God. He was in the kingdom of God's divine rule that has been in existence since the beginning of time (1 Ch 29:9-11). **Of heaven:** Or, "kingdom of God" (Lk 7:28). The authority of the kingdom originates from God and out of heaven. When speaking of the kingdom of God, or heaven, kingdom never originates from authority on earth. **Suffers violence:** From the beginning of John's ministry, when the preparation for the kingdom reign of Jesus began, the disciples of John and Jesus were zealous to bring into being what they misunderstood to be a physical kingdom reign of Jesus on earth. They believed that the Messiah would restore civil government and military power to Israel in order to expel the Romans from their land (See 20:21; Lk 19:11; 22:24-30; Jn 6:14:15; At 1:6). However, God never intended that Jesus' kingdom be of this world (Jn 18:36,37).

11:13-17 Until John: See Lk 16:16. The Sinai law and prophets foretold the coming of John as the voice of the one crying in the wilderness (Ml 4:4-6). The law and prophets also spoke of the Messiah who was at this time standing in their midst. **Elijah:** See 17:10-13; Mk 9:11-13. John was not Elijah who had been resurrected from the dead (Jn 1:21). He was the one of whom it was prophesied (Ml 4:4-6). It was prophesied that he would come in the spirit and power of Elijah (Lk 1:17). **Let him hear:** See 13:9; Mk 4:9; Lk 8:8; Rv 2:7. One must have an open heart and mind in order to hear what the prophets spoke concerning the coming of the Messiah. **This generation:** As unruly children misbehave in the marketplace, Jesus says that His generation was dissatisfied with the religious games they played. Jesus did not behave as the religious leaders of his day assumed the Messiah would behave.

11:18,19 He has a demon: John came living the sacrificial life of a prophet in the wilderness. Nevertheless, the religious leaders of his generation were dissatisfied with one who led such a lowly life. **Gluttonous man:** Jesus is here repeating what people were gossiping about Him.

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John taught in the wilderness, but Jesus taught in the cities. Regardless of the setting in which they taught, those who did not want to hear the truth, propagated all sorts of slanderous gossip about them. Misguided religious leadership will always slander those who are teaching the truth. **Wisdom:** Because the results of correct decisions manifest wisdom, Jesus said that the wise would eventually recognize and justify the life and teachings of both John and Jesus. The wise could recognize that the teachings of both John and Jesus originated from God and not man.

WOE UNTO THE CITIES

11:20-22 Rebuke the cities: Jesus had taught in the cities. However, many in these cities had rejected His teaching. In this context, therefore, He rebukes them for their unbelief. **Mighty works:** The cities had rejected His message regardless of the many miracles He had worked in them (Lk 4:23; Jn 21:25). The miracles were worked in order to produce belief, but in the case of these cities, such did not happen (See Jn 20:30,31). **Chorazin ... Bethsaida:** Chorazin and Bethsaida had great witness manifested within their limits by the personal miraculous work of Jesus. They had more opportunity to repent than the ancient Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon (See Is 23:7-18; Ez 26:14; 27:1-11; 28:1-10). **Sackcloth and ashes:** This was an outward sign of repentance, humility and submission to God (Is 58:5; Jn 3:5). If the miraculous works that Jesus did in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented. Jesus seems to indicate that the citizens of the Jewish cities had contented themselves with their metropolitan religious life and were not interested in a carpenter's son from Nazareth. **Day of judgment:** See 10:15; 11:24. Reference here would be to the destruction the Roman armies would spread across the land of Palestine in the consummation of national Israel in A.D. 70. This would be a day of judgment in time, though such a judgment would also come at the end of time upon the world and all who reject Jesus (Compare 2 Pt 3:10,11).

11:23,24 Capernaum: Jesus resided here after leaving Nazareth. Many miraculous works and teachings were accomplished in this city. As a result, the residents of Capernaum would be held accountable for their rejection of Jesus. Their privilege of having the personal testimony and work of the Son of God meant that they would be held accountable for greater judgment. **Hades:** Proud Capernaum would be brought down to the realm of the unseen world of the dead. **Sodom:** This Old Testament Gentile city was destroyed because of her wickedness (Gn 19:24,25,34; Ez 16:48,49). However, if she had had the personal witness of Jesus, she would have repented.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

11:25,26 Hidden these things: The behavior of the righteous life is considered foolishness to those who have exalted worldly wisdom and ways (See 13:10ff; Ex 7:3,4; 2 Sm 12:11,12; Is 12:1; Ps 8:2; Rm 6:17; 1 Co 1:19,21-25; 2:8; 2 Co 3:14). **Babes:** Those who are of a humble heart will

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listen to those things that deal with our spiritual relationship with God. For this reason, God sent forth John and Jesus into a humble environment. Those who are of a humble heart will listen.

11:27 All things have been delivered to Me: During His ministry on earth, Jesus knew that all authority had been delivered to Him in order to reign over all things (See 28:18; Jn 3:35; 13:3; 17:2; 1 Co 15:27; 1 Pt 3:22). He was moving toward the ascension and right hand of the Father where He would exercise all authority as King of kings and Lord of lords (Ep 1:20-23; 1 Tm 6:15; see comments Dn 2:44; 7:13,14). Since He has now ascended to the right hand of the Father, all men approach God through Him (Jn 14:6; compare Jn 7:29; 10:15; 17:25; 1 Tm 2:5). **Know the Father:** See Jn 1:18; 6:46; 10:15.

11:28-30 Come to Me: Because all authority had been given to Jesus, He made this invitation to all people to come to Him. Compare Jn 6:35-51; 7:37; Jr 31:25. **Labor ... heavy laden:** Jesus' invitation is to those who live under the stress and turmoil of the world. Those who recognize their spiritual poverty realize that they need grace and mercy. Those who live under the oppression of religious traditions and religious emotionalism need the freedom that Jesus has to offer (See 5:3; 23:4; At 15:10; Gl 5:1; 1 Pt 5:6,7). In the religious context of Jesus' teachings are those who have been burdened with their struggle for legal justification by the performance of law and good works (See Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; 3:11-14; see comments intro. to Gl). These people needed to be delivered from the bondage of their own self-imposed religion (Gl 5:1). **Take My yoke:** The yoke was a heavy burden that was used to laden oxen for plowing the fields. The burdens of the world and religious traditions laden those of this world who trust in themselves (See Dt 28:48; Jr 28:14; Lm 1:14; Gl 5:1). The freedom that one receives in Christ makes the yoke of Jesus' commandments light. When one is motivated by grace and love, the commandments of God are not a burden (1 Jn 5:3). **Learn:** Jn 6:45; 13:15; Ep 4:20; Ph 2:5; 1 Pt 2:21; 2 Pt 3:18; 1 Jn 2:6. **Rest for your souls:** One finds peace in realizing that his sins are forgiven by the grace of God. One finds peace of mind when understanding that God has loved us and delivered us from our sin through the cross of Christ. In Christ, one is not under the curse of law, that is, having to keep law perfectly in an effort to save oneself (See comments Gl 3:11-14). In Christ one can cast all anxiety upon God who cares for our emotional and spiritual well-being (1 Pt 5:6,7; compare Jn 14:27; 16:33; Rm 1:7; 8:6; 14:17; Ph 4:7).

Chapter 12

THE SABBATH CONTROVERSY

(Mk 2:23 – 3:6; Lk 6:1-11)

12:1,2 The events Matthew records here are not necessarily in chronological order concerning concerning the three and a half year ministry of Jesus. Matthew's purpose is to show the increasing hostility of the Jewish religious leadership that Jesus generated in order to take Himself to the cross (See Jn 10:17,18). **At that time:** This is after the second Passover

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of Jesus' ministry (Lk 6:1). **Began to pluck ears of grain:** The legalistic Pharisees were not accusing the disciples of stealing the grain. Under the Sinai law, one had a right to pluck the grain from another's field when traveling, though he could not put a sickle to the crop (See Dt 23:25). They were accusing Jesus and the disciples of breaking their traditional laws surrounding the Sabbath by doing the meager work of plucking out the grain on the Sabbath. Jesus and the disciples were violating one of the numerous laws the Pharisees had bound as a result of the traditions of the fathers in order that the Sabbath be kept (See Ex 20:10; 36:2,3; Nm 15:32-36; intro. to Gl).

12:3-6 What David did: See 1 Sm 21:1-7. What David did was actually against lesser legalities of the law, for only the priests were to eat of the showbread (See Ex 25:30; Lv 24:5-9; Nm 28:9,10; 1 Sm 21:6). Though David's actions were technically unlawful according to the law that forbade anyone eating the showbread other than the priests, there was a higher law of God that superseded the original law. That higher law was the preservation of David, God's anointed. The Pharisees recognized this. However, they justified David's actions while at the same time complained that Jesus and the disciples were breaking the law of the Sabbath. Jesus pointed out their inconsistent application of the law, though in this context Jesus and the disciples did not violate any Sinai law. They violated the Pharisees' restrictions surrounding the Sabbath law. **Priests ... break the Sabbath:** The priests had to work in violation of Sabbath laws in order to prepare sacrifices for the people (Nm 28:9,10). However, they were blameless because their God-ordained work to prepare sacrifices for the people superseded the law to rest on the Sabbath. **One greater than the temple:** See verses 41,42; Is 66:1,2. Jesus was more glorious than the temple that the Jews honored above all things on earth (See the prophecy of Hg 2:7-9; compare 2 Ch 6:18; Mt 3:1; Hb 3:3).

12:7,8 I desire mercy and not sacrifice: Sacrifice was a law of God. However, mercy was a higher law of God. The Pharisees in their legal understanding and application of law could not understand this principle concerning the laws of God (See Hs 6:6; Mc 6:6-8). Jesus here attacks the judgmental attitudes of the Pharisees that motivated them to criticize the plucking of the grain. **Lord of the Sabbath:** The One who was in their midst was the One who had authority over the Sabbath. Jesus was of the triune God who instituted the Sabbath. Mark records that Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man (Mk 2:27). The Sabbath was made for the benefit of man, for on the Sabbath men were to rest from their labors (Ex 20:11). The Pharisees thought that man was made for the Sabbath. In other words, they believed that God made the Sabbath a holy day of worship in order that men renew their spiritual life and worship to God on this day. However, God intended it to be a day of rest for man (Ex 20:10,11). It was thus a law that was established for the physical well-being of man (See Mk 2:27,28). In reference to the nation of Israel, the Sabbath was given to national Israel as a sign between God and the nation of Israel. When the Sinai law was abolished, the Sabbath law was also taken away (See Cl 2:16).

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12:9,10 The events recorded here took place on another Sabbath than the one in the previous verses. See Mk 3:1-5; Lk 6:6-10; Jn 5:10; 7:23. **Hand had withered:** The legalistic Pharisees are here more concerned over the violation of their Sabbath laws than the healing of this man. Such manifests the hypocrisy of religion that is based on an outward manifestation of a legal presentation of religiosity without concentration on the heart for spiritual change (See comments Mk 7:6-9). **They asked Him:** The Pharisees here seek another opportunity to accuse Jesus of violating their laws of the Sabbath. They do such in order to accuse Him before the people that He violates the law.

12:11,12 Mark records that at this time Jesus was grieved because of their hardened hearts (Mk 3:5). It seems that they did not doubt that Jesus could miraculously heal the withered hand. They wanted to see if He would do such on the Sabbath. If He did such work on the Sabbath, then they could accuse Him of working against their laws of the Sabbath. The real conflict here is between the legal and earthly interest of the Pharisees as opposed to the human interests of Jesus. Jesus pointed out that if the Pharisees' material interests were in danger on the Sabbath, they would do what was necessary to rescue a sheep. However, they were here critical of Jesus because of His human interests in healing on the Sabbath. **Is it lawful:** By asking a question in order to answer their argument, Jesus was saying that it was always right to do good (Gl 6:10). It was simply right to do good on the Sabbath in reference to human interests because men are more important than sheep.

12:13,14 The Pharisees ... held counsel against Him: Herein is manifested the hardness of heart of those who profess a legal-oriented religion. The Pharisees cared nothing for the man with the withered hand. Their concern was for their doctrinal strictness in keeping their traditions in reference to the keeping of the Sabbath. By upholding their legal practices in reference to the Sabbath, they were maintaining their arrogant positions of leadership among the people. At this time in the controversy between Jesus and the religious leaders, the tension begins to grow. The Pharisees at this time in the ministry of Jesus schemed to remove Him (Lk 6:11). He was in competition with their positions of leadership, their hypocritical lives, and inconsistent beliefs. They were infuriated because He manifested the inconsistencies of their theology and the callousness of their hearts. **Destroy Him:** Because these religious leaders could not consistently argue with Jesus through correct reasoning from the Old Testament Scriptures, they were frustrated to the point of killing Him. Religions that are developed with emphasis on outward appearances and ceremonial worship, are often hypocritical in the sense that people can be members of such religions without changed hearts. The religious leaders in this context manifested the hypocrisy of such religions by planning evil when professing a form of righteousness. See Mk 3:6; Lk 6:11; Jn 5:18; 10:39; 11:53.

JESUS HEALS MANY DISEASES

(Mk 3:7-12)

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12:15,16 He withdrew: We must always keep in mind that throughout Jesus' ministry He was controlling the tension between Himself and the religious leaders. He was doing such in order to take Himself to the cross by their envious hands (See comments Jn 10:17,18). In this case, therefore, Jesus perceived that the Pharisees and Herodians (Mk 3:6) were about to kill Him. He therefore withdrew to the sea of Galilee (Mk 3:7). It was not in His plan to be killed by these religious leaders at this time in His ministry (Compare 10:23). **Herodians:** These are mentioned by Mark. They were an influential political group that was composed mainly of the aristocratic Sadducean priests. They supported the reign of the Herods in Palestine, as well as Roman occupation of Palestine (See 22:16; Mk 3:6; 12:13). **He healed them all:** Jesus healed all in the multitudes who followed Him on this occasion (See Mk 3:7-12). **Not make Him known:** See 8:4; 9:30; 17:9. He did not want to expedite at this time the desire of His enemies to take His life.

12:17-21 Isaiah prophesied of the characteristics of the Messiah (Is 42:1-4). The nature of the prophecy was that the Messiah would not be one who sought recognition as men do. Jesus would not as men manifest an egotistical spirit in order to seek publicity and popularity. He came from a humble earthly background with a spirit to call all people into humble service of God and their fellow man. It would be through His service and love that people would be drawn to Him during His ministry. When He went to the cross, it would be His sacrifice on the cross as the Son of God that would draw all men to Him (Jn 8:28; 12:32). **Spirit:** See Lk 4:18; Jn 3:34. **Proclaim justice to the Gentiles:** The prophecy is that the Gentiles would have the gospel of God's grace declared to them. They would be justified by faith (Rm 1:17; Gl 3:11; Hb 10:38). **Bruised reed ... smoking flax:** These are figures of the Gentiles' weakness of faith and mourning over their sin. As prophesied by Isaiah, the Messiah would not be hardened concerning the Gentiles' recognition of their spiritual poverty. He would respond with compassion and forgiveness of their sins. And thus, in Him the Gentiles would have faith (Ep 2:12).

ACCUSATIONS CONCERNING BEELZEBUL

(Mk 3:22; Lk 11:14-28)

12:22,23 Demon: See comments 4:24. The demon who possessed this man caused him to be deaf and blind. Son of **David:** See 1:1; 9:27; 21:9. They were asking if this Jesus could be the Messiah. Compare Jn 4:29,30; 7:31.

12:24 Beelzebul: Or, Beelzebub. Reference is probably to the Philistine god of Ekron the Jews of Jesus' day considered to be the ruler of all demons (2 Kg 1:2,16; see Mt 9:34; 12:24,27; Mk 3:22,29; Lk 11:15-20). **By Beelzebul:** This is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (vss 31,32). The Pharisees were stating that the work of the Holy Spirit through Jesus to cast out demons was the work of Satan. As long as one believes that the work of Jesus was the work of Satan, then he will not come to a knowledge of the truth and be obedient to the will of Jesus. Therefore, those who op-

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pose the work of the disciples of Jesus by claiming that the disciples are false teachers, are blaspheming against the work of the Holy Spirit. There can be no forgiveness for this sin simply because the ones who so blaspheme will not accept the truth spoken by the disciples, and thus, repent.

12:25-27 Knew their thoughts: See 9:4; Jn 2:25; Rv 2:23. Compare Ps 44:21; 139:2. Jesus could know the thoughts and motives of men while on earth. **Divided against itself:** Jesus answers the Pharisees by saying that Satan cannot work against himself by casting out his own demons who were doing his work. **Your children:** If the disciples of the Pharisees pretended to cast out demons, then certainly they were doing such by Beelzebul. Jesus thus asked them to judge their sons. If they accused Him of casting out demons by Beelzebul, then their sons were attempting to exorcise demons in the name of Beelzebul (See Mk 9:38; At 19:13,14). **Your judges:** In the end it will be found that the false Jewish exorcists could not actually cast out demons. The manifestation of their false work would be a judgment against them that they were not of God. No one was allowed to cast out demons in the 1st century except those who were sent forth by Jesus. The reason no one other than the disciples was allowed to cast out demons was that the exorcism of demons was to manifest the power of the disciples of Jesus over the realm of Satan.

12:28,29 By the Spirit of God: The Holy Spirit was working through Jesus to cast out demons, therefore, accusations against Jesus that He was doing such by Beelzebul were actually accusations against the Holy Spirit (See vss 31,32). Luke records that by “the finger of God” (Lk 11:20)—the power of God (Ex 8:19)—Jesus cast out demons. Therefore, if Jesus cast out demons by the power of God, then the kingdom reign of God was manifested to them (See Dn 2:44; 7:24; Lk 1:22; 11:20; 17:20,21). **Strong man’s house:** Satan is pictured as the strong man. Jesus would crush the domain of Satan when He died on the cross and was resurrected from the dead (See comments Rv 20:1,2). At this time, Jesus was entering the domain of Satan and destroying his house by the casting out of demons. This point manifested the reason why God allowed demons to possess people at this time in history. The purpose was to manifest the power of Jesus over all that Satan had or has.

12:30 Jesus was calling on those who heard Him to choose sides. In the conflict between God and Satan, one would have to choose either the side of righteousness (God) or the side of evil (Satan). One does not have the option to choose both (6:24; 16:24-26; Mk 9:40). One is either producing fruit for God or he is producing fruit for Satan (Jn 15:1-5; Rv 3:15,16).

12:31 Blasphemy: See verse 24; Mk 3:28-30; Lk 12:10; At 7:51. This is malicious and injurious speech against the work of God. It is such because the accusers are assigning the work of God to Satan. This was the grave error of the Pharisees in their attack against Jesus and His ministry. Jesus came from God and His works came from God through the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:2). But the Pharisees proclaimed that Jesus had an unclean spirit (See Mk 3:30). They were thus blaspheming against the divine work of the Holy Spirit through Jesus. When Jesus would leave the world by

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His ascension, then He would carry on His work through the disciples. Malicious speech and work against the disciples' work would also be blasphemy against the work of God through the Holy Spirit.

12:32 Will not be forgiven: Blasphemy cannot be forgiven simply because those who are making the accusations will not accept the message of truth the disciples are proclaiming, and thus, be saved by obedience to the gospel. Many misunderstood, and thus rejected Jesus during His earthly ministry. However, when Jesus ascended, He sent the Holy Spirit upon the early disciples in order to confirm the message they preached (Jn 16:7,8,13,14; Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). Many of those who first rejected Jesus during His earthly ministry later accepted Him through the Spirit-inspired preaching of the apostles and prophets (At 2:36-41; 6:7; 9:7). However, those who rejected this last means of revelation to man through the giving of the Holy Spirit to the early apostles and prophets, would receive no mercy from God. They would be guilty of "eternal sin," that is, sin that would result in their final separation from God (Mk 3:29; 2 Th 1:6-9). In this context, therefore, Jesus looks beyond the immediate confrontation He is having with the Pharisees. He is looking to the time when the kingdom would be manifested with power in Acts 2.

12:33 Known by its fruit: Jesus is asking the Pharisees to be logical concerning the good works that He did. As the good fruit of a tree is evidence that the tree is good (7:16-20), then Jesus' good works are evidence that He is doing the good work of God, not Beelzebul (Compare 7:15-20; Jn 9:25,30,33). In this context, the Pharisees were blaspheming against the work of Jesus because they were assigning His good work to be of Satan (See At 5:33ff).

12:34-37 The principle of the preceding verse is here applied to the Pharisees. The evil accusations that were coming out of their mouths against Jesus were evidence of their evil and hardened hearts (Pv 4:23). **Generation of vipers:** See 3:7; 23:33; Jn 8:44. The legalistic Pharisees in their self-righteous religiosity manifested themselves as a group of snakes who spit out venom against those who would manifest the grace of God among men (See intro. to GI). Such is the case when traditional religionists rise up against the truth and work of God. **Good treasure:** Good hearts produce good things. However, malicious and slanderous speech will always betray the evil hearts from which such originates (Compare 15:18; Lk 6:45; Ep 4:29; Js 3:2-12; 3 Jn 9,10; 1 Sm 24:13). **Every idle word:** Reference here is to the slanderous, malicious and injurious words that the Pharisees spoke against Jesus. One will reap the results of such wickedness in the day of judgment. In the historical context of these Jews, judgment would be handed down on them in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and national Israel. Therefore, their judgment was soon to come. In the final judgment their destiny would be the destruction of eternal hell. **By your words you will be condemned:** Jesus' statement here emphasizes the tremendous responsibility one has in reference to what he says. Sins of the mouth will condemn one (See Js 2:21-25; 3:2). They will do such because our speech manifests our hearts. By good speech,

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the heart of the good man is judged good and accounted righteous before God. Therefore, by one's speech he is judged either to be justified or condemned.

SEEKING FOR SIGNS

12:38,39 *We want to see a sign:* See 16:1; Mk 8:11; Jn 2:18; 1 Co 1:18. They wanted to see a sign from heaven (Lk 11:16). But to ask for a sign from Jesus at this time in His ministry was to ignore all the signs that He had already done that proved He was from God (Jn 2:18; 3:2; compare 4:6; Mk 8:11; Lk 11:16; Jn 2:18; 6:30; 1 Co 1:22). Therefore, the scribes and Pharisees were not here asking for proof of Jesus' sonship. They were seeking for an opportunity to accuse Him. ***An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign:*** See 16:4. The word "adultery" is here used with a common meaning, that is, reference is to Israel's breaking of their covenant with God. The nation of Israel was in a covenant relationship with God (Is 57:3; Hs 3:1; Ez 16:15). They were married to God. However, they rejected the conditions of the contract they had with God and followed after the creation of gods they imagined in their minds (See comments Js 4:4). They invented their own religion (See comments Mk 7:1-9; Gl 1:13,14). By their rejection of Jesus they were once again committing spiritual adultery. They were thus an adulterous generation who was once again rejecting their covenant with God by rejecting God's Son. ***Sign of the prophet Jonah:*** See Jh 1:17. As Jonah was three days in the great fish, so Jesus, after His death on the cross, would be three days in the tomb.

12:40 *Three days:* See 16:21. Some have argued that Jesus was not actually three full days in the tomb. However, any part of a day was considered by the Jews to represent the full day. Most Bible students believe that Jesus was crucified on Friday, and subsequently buried on that day. He was in the tomb, therefore, on Friday evening, stayed there throughout Saturday, and then rose early on Sunday morning (Mk 16:9). In the minds of the Jews, this would have been considered three days. Some Bible students affirm that Jesus was crucified on Thursday, and thus, was in the tomb the whole of Friday and Saturday (See Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; Lk 24:7). ***The great fish:*** The Greek word that is used here refers to a "sea monster." We do not know the type of fish that swallowed Jonah. It was a fish that was prepared by God to be able to accomplish the task for which God sent it (Jh 1:17). ***Heart of the earth:*** That is, He would be in the tomb (See Ps 63:9; Ep 4:9).

12:41 *Nineveh:* This was the ancient capital of the Assyrian Empire (Gn 10:11; Nh 2:8; Zp 2:13-15). ***Will condemn:*** The reason the inhabitants of Nineveh will condemn Jesus' generation is that the people eagerly repented because of the preaching of Jonah (Jh 3:5). Though Jesus was the Son of God and did many miracles, the generation to which He preached would not repent. ***Unto the preaching:*** They repented in that they turned their lives unto that which Jonah preached (Jh 3:5). They repented in that they turned to the principles that were preached.

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12:42 Queen of the south: Sheba came to see the marvels of Solomon (1 Kg 10:1-13; 2 Ch 9:1). **Ends of the earth:** In reference to Israel, Sheba came from the most distant known part of the earth. She came from what is believed to be the northern parts of present-day Ethiopia. The fact that she came was a manifestation that her heart was open to discover the work of the God of Solomon. In the context here, Jesus contrasts her eagerness to hear of God with the hardness of heart of the generation to which He was speaking. **Greater than Solomon:** Because Jesus was greater than both Jonah and Solomon, His generation should be eager to hear what He had to say.

12:43-45 Unclean spirit: Jesus warns that evil spirits that He casts out could be invited back by an unrepentant heart. When the spirits returned they were worse than when they first indwelt. **Dry places:** Jesus refers to a commonly accepted belief that affirmed that evil spirits dwelt in the deserts. His point here is that upon repentance, the evil practices of one's life must be replaced by that which is good. If one does not fill in the vacuum of unrighteous deeds with good, the last state will be worse than the first (See 2 Pt 2:20-22; Hb 6:4-6). The generation to which Jesus spoke was spiritually dry. It was a generation religiously led by scribes and Pharisees who taught an outward performance of ceremonial religion with little or no concentration on the heart. Ceremonial religion is often void of spirituality. God had given the best to the generation of the Jews of the 1st century by sending His Son. The religious leaders' rejection of the Son of God would judge them to be more spiritually dry than any generation before them. Their knowledge of the Son made them more accountable.

JESUS' MOTHER & BROTHERS

(Mk 3:31-35; Lk 8:19-21)

12:46,47 Mother and His brothers: After Jesus was born of Mary, she had other children by Joseph her husband. However, Joseph had no sexual intercourse with Mary until Jesus was born (1:25). According to 13:55,56, Jesus had four brothers and at least two sisters (Mk 6:3). Jesus, however, was Mary's firstborn (Lk 2:7). At the time of this event, Joseph had possibly died. See 13:55; Mk 6:3; Jn 2:12; 7:3,5,10; At 1:14; 1 Co 9:5; Gl 1:19.

12:48,49 Who is My mother: Jesus is not showing disrespect for His mother. What He is stating is that one's spiritual relationship with the family of God is greater than physical family relationships. In this sense, therefore, Christians have mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters throughout the world. In making this statement, Jesus was not minimizing His relationship with His physical family. He was bringing all spiritual brothers and sisters into the same relationship He had with His physical mother, brothers and sisters (Compare 1 Tm 5:1,2).

12:50 Those who commit themselves to serve God will enjoy the extended family of God. They will become a part of the universal family of God (19:29; Mk 10:29,30). Therefore, when one is spiritually born into the family of God, he comes into a spiritual relationship with God's family throughout the world (See Jn 15:14; Gl 5:6; 6:15; Cl 3:11; Hb 2:11).

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Chapter 13

BESIDE THE SEA

(Mk 4:1,2; Lk 8:4)

13:1-3 Matthew brings together in this chapter many of the parables that Jesus taught on different occasions. **Parables:** A parable is a metaphorical story or illustration that is taken from something that can happen in real life. The real-life possibility of the parable is used to illustrate a spiritual truth. However, the interpreter should be careful not to attach a meaning to every detail of a parable. Through parables Jesus sought to teach a principle truth. It is this truth that must be considered as the main purpose for any particular parable. Jesus never intended that one parable teach all truth concerning the nature of His kingdom reign. For this reason, He used different parables. Each parable explains a different or added concept of truth of the kingdom of God. Jesus explained the purpose for His use of parables in verses 10,11. Through His parables, He sought to reveal truth to those who were humbly sincere. Through parables He also sought to conceal truth from those who had established in their minds their own invented religious thoughts. The parables, therefore, judged the minds and hearts of the audience. Those who would understand the spiritual truth of the parables judged themselves to be of a heart that would accept the kingdom reign of Jesus. The parables were directed to an audience He was preparing to accept His kingdom reign that would come in fulfillment of Daniel 2:44 and 7:13,14. And since His kingdom reign from heaven would be in the hearts of all people (Lk 17:20,21), then He was preparing the hearts of people to accept Him as the King of kings and Lord of Lords (1 Tm 6:15).

PARABLE OF THE SOILS

(Mk 4:3-25; Lk 8:5-18)

13:3-9 Sower: This is one who plants seeds by scattering them on the ground. The sower is the proclaimer of the word of God. Jesus speaks of the word of God that affects the hearts of people in different ways. **Way-side:** Some of the seeds inadvertently fell on the walkway of the field. The soil had been trampled down, and thus, was hard. The seed did not penetrate the soil. The birds could easily see and eat it. **Stony places:** This was the area of the field where the soil was thin on top of the rocks. The rocks would retain the rain water under the seeds, and thus produce a damp soil in which the seeds would quickly germinate and grow. However, these areas of the field would also quickly dry when the sun scorched the earth. **Thorns:** The water of the soil around the thorn bushes would be dried up by the roots of the thorns. As a result, any seed that was planted and grew in the area of the thorns would eventually be choked out by the thorns. **Good ground:** This would be the soil that was especially prepared for the seed. As a result, the seed produced what was expected of it. Jesus now challenges His hearers to listen to the meaning of the parable (11:15). Those who would have a receptive mind would seek to understand what He was teaching through the parables. Those who were

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of the nature of the kingdom would be able to understand the spiritual meaning of the parables.

PURPOSE OF THE PARABLES

13:10 Four of the seven parables that Jesus gives, and are recorded in this chapter by Matthew, were addressed to the multitudes in general. Three of the parables were spoken only to the disciples. Because of their receptivity, the disciples sought to know the meaning of the parable of the sower (See Mk 4:10-12; Lk 8:9,10).

13:11 *Given to you to know the mysteries:* Jesus taught in parables in order to reveal truth to those who had an open mind and heart. The disciples were willing to hear, and thus, the parables were meant to teach them. However, the truth of the parables was concealed from those who were blinded by their own prejudices, pride, jealousy or religious traditions (See 11:25; 16:17; 19:11; 20:23; Mk 4:11; see comments Mk 7:1-9; compare Jn 6:65; 1 Co 2:10; 1 Jn 2:20,27). *Mysteries of the kingdom:* The secret or hidden truths of the kingdom reign of God were now being revealed to those who were willing to listen and learn (Compare 1 Co 2:7,8; Ep 3:1-5; 1 Pt 1:10-12). However, for those who would not listen to Jesus, the truth concerning the kingdom reign would not be revealed simply because they would not listen to Jesus.

13:12,13 *For whoever has:* The scribes and Pharisees thought that they had a privileged relationship with God because of their religious heritage. However, they were hardened of heart, and thus, were not willing to listen to the teachings of Jesus (25:29; Mk 4:25; Lk 8:18; 19:26). But those who had willing hearts, and hungered after spiritual truth, would receive the teachings of Jesus concerning the kingdom. *Seeing they do not see:* Jesus taught in parables in order to separate the truth seekers from those who had hardened hearts. The scribes and Pharisees thought that they were spiritually right. However, their inability to understand the truth of the message of the parables identified them as blind guides, and thus hardened in heart (Jr 5:21; Ez 12:2). The parables thus placed the responsibility of judging on the shoulders of those who heard. Compare Is 42:19,20; Dt 29:4.

13:14,15 *Prophecy of Isaiah:* The rejection of Jesus' teachings by the religious leaders fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 6:9,10 (See Jn 12:40; At 28:26,27; Rm 11:8; 2 Co 3:14,15; see comments Mk 7:1-9). Isaiah's prophecy was originally made in the context of the hardness of heart of his generation. However, the same was also true of Jesus' generation. In order to understand the nature of the hardness of heart that Jesus experienced, we must understand the nature of the false prophets of Isaiah's day. *The heart of this people has become calloused:* This figure of speech emphasizes the fact that their minds had grown dull by the influence of worldly thinking and empty religiosity (Compare Dt 32:15; 1 Tm 5:11; Hb 5:11).

13:16,17 The disciples were blessed by Jesus (16:17; Jn 20:29). They were blessed because they were honest and sincere in their efforts to fol-

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low the teachings of Jesus (Lk 10:23,24). **Desired to see:** The Old Testament prophets, and righteous by faith who lived under the Sinai law and covenant, looked forward to the things that were revealed through Jesus (See Jn 8:56; Gl 4:4,5; Hb 11:13,25,26,39,40; 1 Pt 1:10-12).

EXPLAINING THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

13:18-23 Wayside: This soil represents the hearts of those who are prejudiced, jealous and full of pride. Since there are those who are of such a nature, they do not understand the teachings concerning the kingdom because they do not understand the nature of the kingdom (See comments 5:3-12). They hear the teaching, but they cannot understand because of the condition of their hearts. **Stony places:** These are those who quickly and easily receive the word of God. They are quickly converted. However, their commitment to the Lord never develops (Compare comments Lk 14:25-35). Their dedication is only surface. Because they have no depth in their spirituality, the trials of life and persecution cause them to fall away (Compare Js 1:23-26). **Among the thorns:** These are those who genuinely receive the word of God. They grow. However, the love of the things of the world and the desire to have the wealth of the world is stronger in their lives than their love of God (19:23; Lk 21:34; 1 Tm 6:9,10,17; Js 4:4). Once their thinking is clouded with concerns over the things of the world, they develop a religiosity that conforms to their materialistic way of life. **Good ground:** This is the honest and good heart (Lk 8:15). This is the one who desires truth, for he is seeking for truth. Because he is a willing listener and learner, he comprehends the truth, and subsequently, brings forth fruit in his life (Jn 15:2-5). We must also assume that there are those who want to hear the gospel (See comments At 18:8-10). By assuming this we will be motivated to preach the gospel, for there are many people with good hearts who will obey God once they have an opportunity.

PARABLE OF THE TARES

13:24-30 The explanation to this parable begins in verse 36. **Kingdom of heaven:** Reference is to the kingdom reign of God that originates out of heaven. The Father was reigning at the time Jesus made these statements (1 Ch 29:10,11). However, there was going to be a change in the King and head of the kingdom reign of Deity. The change was going to be from the Father to the Son. After the ascension, Jesus would be King and head over all things (28:18; Dn 2:44; 7:13,14; Mk 4:30; Lk 13:18; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22). The parables are in preparation for the coming kingdom reign of the Son. In the parables Jesus explains what He, as the King to come, would expect of those who would allow His kingdom reign in their hearts (See comments Lk 17:20,21). **While men slept:** It was the responsibility of those who slept to keep watch over the fields. When those who are responsible for the hearts of men fail in their duty to watch over the flock, Satan will damage or destroy the flock through his influences (See Gl 6:1). **Sowed tares:** This was darnel, a plant that resembled wheat until the time of maturity. It hindered the growth of the wheat and the harvest.

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It was not known that the tares had been sown in the field and among the wheat until the time of the harvest when the grain was formed. **The time of harvest:** If the tares were removed during the growing period, then too much wheat would have been destroyed in the process of rooting up the tares. Therefore, the harvesters had to wait until the time of the harvest in order to separate the tares from the wheat. However, because the harvest is delayed, the disciples must not assume that the harvest will not occur. God sometimes delays His judgment. His delays must not be understood that He will not judge.

PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

(Mk 4:30-32; Lk 13:18,19)

13:31,32 Kingdom of heaven: See verse 24. **Mustard seed:** This is a very small seed (See Mk 4:30-32). Though it is small, it grows to become a strong tree. In this way, the response to the kingdom reign of God starts small in any area of the world. But from small beginnings it spreads to the hearts of men throughout an entire region. Such was the case with the response to the kingdom reign of Jesus in Acts 2. It started small with the few disciples who were with Jesus during His earthly ministry, but grew greater after the beginning and spread throughout the world (See Lk 24:47; At 1:8; 2:41; 4:4; 6:7; 8:4). Evangelists must therefore be patient in beginning the movement of the kingdom in the hearts of men in any particular region. Patient planting and cultivation of the seed of the kingdom in the hearts of men will eventually produce a great movement. The task of the leader is to move the masses by reaching the individuals.

PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

13:33 Leaven: Yeast is placed in the dough where it is not seen. It later grows throughout the dough. Only the effects of its growth can be seen. The influence of Jesus' disciples is quiet and consistent. When the kingdom reign of God is accepted by honest and willing hearts, it changes the entire man, and subsequently, the entire man becomes an influence to the entire community (5:13-16; See Lk 17:20,21). When kingdom truths are sown in the hearts of men in any society, they eventually spread throughout the society. The hearts of men and women of a society are changed one at a time. In view of one's understanding of this nature of the seed of the kingdom, one must be motivated to live the word in every aspect of life. Evangelism is a way of life, not a church program. **Measure:** This is about four liters. The power and influence of the leaven is that it affects all.

13:34,35 At this time in the ministry of Jesus, Jesus used the teaching method of parables to communicate truth to the people (Mk 4:33). In reference to this method of teaching, Jesus quoted Psalm 78:2, a prophecy that He would teach in parables. In this text, Matthew paraphrases the Psalm in applying it to Jesus' ministry of teaching. As Jesus continued teaching throughout His ministry, people would begin to understand the parables. Because we have the full revelation of God in the Bible, it is easier for us

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to understand than the audience who first heard the parables. **Kept secret:** See Rm 16:25,26; 1 Co 2:7; Ep 3:9; Cl 1:26. Those things that had been kept secret since the creation of the world were revealed through the parables (See comments Ep 3:1-5; compare 1 Pt 1:10-12).

EXPLANATION OF THE TARES

13:36 Explain to us the parable: The disciples did not understand the parable of the tares. They had difficulty understanding because the nature of the kingdom was a new revelation. It was revelation of truth that was not known by the Rabbis of Israel. They did not understand the implications of what He was teaching in reference to the kingdom. They thus waited until everyone left, and then in a private conversation with Jesus, asked Him to explain the parables.

13:37,38 Son of Man: Jesus was the Messiah who was sowing the good seed of truth in the hearts of men. **Field is the world:** This is the hearts of all the world where the teaching of Jesus is received (See 24:14; 28:19; Mk 16:15; Rm 10:13-15; Cl 1:6,23). **Good seed:** These are those in whom the truth of God has been planted and who have been sent forth to spread their influence throughout the world. These are the sons of Abraham by faith whom Jesus sends forth among the inhabitants of the world. **Tares:** These are the hardened and disobedient of the world who often dwell among the sons of the kingdom. In the context here, these would be the legalistic religious leaders who had arisen in Israel and were influencing the hearts of the Jews away from God and to their own legal system of religion (See 15:1-9; 23; Mk 7:1-9; Jn 8:44; At 13:10).

13:39 Enemy: Satan has done this work. Therefore, one of Satan's greatest works is to influence religious people to remain religious, but in their religiosity, they influence the sincere away from truth and true worship of God. In the context of Jesus' ministry to the Jews, Satan had worked through misguided religious leaders to lead Israel away from God. **Harvest is the end of the age:** The text says end of "this" age in verse 40. Reference here is not to the end of the world, but the end of the Jewish dispensation. The Greek phrase translated "end of this age" is from a phrase that means "consummation of the age" (See also 24:3; 28:20). The consummation of the age would come in A.D. 70 with the final destruction of national Israel.

13:40,41 Tares are gathered and burned: Jesus' emphasis here is on the separation of those who were righteous by faith and accepted Jesus, from those Jews who rejected Him or hypocritically accepted Him (See Gl 2:4,5). When Rome destroyed Jerusalem, national Israel, and the Jews' religion were visibly manifested to be rejected by God. This was God's open demonstration that Israel was no longer His chosen people with whom He would maintain a special covenant relationship. It was also God's visual demonstration that He had rejected the Jews' religion (See Gl 1:13,14). After the cross, national Israel was to be dissolved in Christ where there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Gl 3:28,29). As a result of the destruction of national Israel, those who were sons of God by faith were

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manifested as the true children of God. **Messengers:** The translation of the Greek *angelos* in this context should be “messengers,” as it is so translated in 11:10; 24:31; Lk 7:24; 9:52; 2 Co 12:7; Js 2:25 in most translations. These were the messengers of Jesus who went forth preaching the gospel of the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mk 16:14,20). They went forth to harvest in order to gather out of Israel those who would respond to the Messiahship of Jesus. Before the destruction of national Israel in A.D. 70, the messengers of Jesus gathered out of national Israel through the preaching of the gospel, those who would not suffer the calamity of the end of Israel. Over one million Jews died in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, and thus the mission of the early evangelists was not only to save the souls of people, but also to save their lives. **Gather out of His kingdom:** After the first official announcement of the kingdom reign of Jesus in Acts 2, and preaching of the gospel, the messengers of God went forth from Jerusalem with the message of the gospel. They went to the Jews throughout the world, and thus, gathered out of national Israel those who would allow the kingdom reign of Jesus to dwell in their hearts (See Lk 17:20,21). These were those who accepted the messiahship of Jesus who had become the King of kings and Lord of lords (See 28:18; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Tm 6:15; Rv 3:21; compare Lk 19:14-17).

13:42,43 Cast them into the furnace of fire: The horrific destruction that took place in A.D. 70 on the nation of Israel was certainly the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy that is stated here. Over one million Jews were killed and the city of Jerusalem was burned (See comments ch 24). It was the consummation of the nation of Israel that was prophesied by Daniel and the other prophets (See comments Dn 2 & 7). **Wailing and gnashing of teeth:** This metaphorical statement emphasizes the terror and agony of those who realized that they missed out on God's acceptance because of their disobedience and rejection of the Son of God. Surely, during the months of the war of Rome against Israel leading up to A.D. 70, many recalled the righteous preaching and teaching of the Jesus they had crucified. However, it was too late for repentance. **Righteous will shine forth as the sun:** God's judgment on the rebellious Jews manifested that He was no longer with national Israel. He had rejected the Jews' religion. He was present with those who had responded to the gospel of Jesus. When the rebellious Jews were taken away in the destruction of Jerusalem, Christians were proven to be the new Israel of God because the church continued and grew exceedingly. The true sons of Abraham by faith were manifested to all the world when apostate Israel was cast off by God in A.D. 70 (See comments 24:38-42).

PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE

13:44 Like treasure hidden: As one would seek a hidden treasure that he knew existed, so one must eagerly seek that God's will reign in his heart as it does in heaven (6:9,10; Lk 17:20,21). One must be willing to make every possible sacrifice in order to acquire that which he has discovered in the gospel (See Lk 14:25-35; Ph 3:7,8; Gl 2:20; Rv 3:18). In

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view of the impending judgment of God on national Israel that was in the near future, Jesus here seeks to emphasize the importance that the Jews accept Him as the Messiah. If they accepted Him as the Messiah, as the gospel-obedient did, then they would understand the purpose for the end of Israel.

PARABLE OF THE PEARL

13:45,46 *One pearl of great price:* See Pv 2:4; 3:14,15; 8:10,19. One must be willing to sacrifice all that is necessary in order to be of a mind and heart that will accept the kingdom reign of God. If one is sincerely seeking truth, and finds it, he will be willing to sacrifice all to retain it (See Ep 1:3). There is nothing of this world that can be measured with the value of the kingdom reign one has in his heart. Knowing Jesus is more important than anything of this world. When one truly understands the implications of obedience to the gospel, there is nothing of this world that is more valuable than his covenant with God through Jesus. It would certainly be foolish for one to trade eternal life for a lifetime of worldly living.

PARABLE OF THE DRAGNET

13:47-50 The emphasis of this parable is similar to that of the tares (See vss 24-30,36-43). The net (the preaching of the gospel) is cast out into the sea (the world of the hearts of men). All sorts of fish are caught (those who respond to the gospel) (22:10). Of those who respond, not all will remain faithful. Such will be manifested by the turmoil of the consummation of the age of national Israel. In the decade before the end of national Israel, Jewish persecution of the disciples of Jesus caused many to fall back into the deception of Judaism (See Gl 5:11; 6:12; see Hb 10:39; 2 Pt 2:21,22; see intro. to Hb). These subsequently suffered the fiery destruction of the Jewish State. In the work of God beginning with the preaching of John the Baptist until the consummation of the age of national Israel, God was throwing out the dragnet of the gospel in order to draw out of Israel those who were sons of Abraham by faith (See comments Rm 9:1-3; 10:1).

SUMMATION OF THE PARABLES

13:51,52 *Have you understood:* Jesus is now testing their hearts by asking if they had open minds for His teaching. He thus sought another opportunity to continue to teach them. **Scribe:** This term was originally used to refer to those who made copies of the Sinai law and the Prophets. The term at the time of Jesus was used to refer to one who interpreted and taught the law and the Prophets. These were the authorities on the Sinai law and Jewish traditions. **Things new and old:** The one who is responsible for the keeping of the family can instruct by using old truths that need new applications. The disciples understood the old truths. Jesus was in their presence with new teachings and applications of old truths that they must accept as His teachings. In reference to Old Testament teachings, we must remember that *“these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our admonition”* (1 Co 10:11).

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Destiny Of The Christ

(13:53 – 18:35)

Outline: (1) Destiny of the King (13:53-58), (2) Herod and John (14:1-12), (3) Feeding of the five thousand (14:13-21), (4) The storm at sea (14:22-33), (5) At Gennesaret (14:34-36), (6) Condemnation of religious traditions (15:1-20), (7) Healing a mother's daughter (15:21-28), (8) Feeding the four thousand (15:29-39), (9) Attack of the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:1-4), (10) Warning concerning the leaven (16:5-12), (11) Jesus the Christ and Son of God (16:13-20), (12) Prophecy of Jesus' death (16:21-28), (13) The transfiguration (17:1-13), (14) Faith and healing of a demoniac boy (17:14-23), (15) The temple tax (14:24-27), (16) Greatest in the kingdom (18:1-14), (17) The brother who offends another (18:15-22), (18) Parable of the unforgiving (18:23-35)

DESTINY OF THE KING

13:53,54 His own country: This is the area surrounding Nazareth (2:23; Mk 6:1; Lk 4:16). **He taught:** It was the work of Jesus to teach. In this situation, the teaching was done where religious people in the community met for teaching, that is, the synagogue (Mk 6:1-6). The synagogue was not a part of the teaching structure of the Sinai law. Synagogues were evidently constructed in Palestine sometime after Israel returned from Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C. **Astonished:** What astonished them was that Jesus, one who was from their area, the son of a common carpenter, taught them many things with authority and wisdom (See 7:28,29).

13:55-57 It was difficult for them to accept someone who was local. All of them knew that Jesus was the son of Joseph, the carpenter. **His brothers ... sisters:** After Jesus was born to Mary, Joseph and Mary had many other children (See 1:25; 12:46-50; Mk 6:3). **A Prophet:** Jesus had risen above those of his home town. He taught them many great things. Some of the things He taught at this time were hard for them to accept since they accepted Him only as the carpenter's son. The prophet, therefore, that spiritually and intellectually rises above those of his own country will often be rejected by those of His community. Compare Mk 6:4; Lk 4:16ff; Jn 4:44.

13:58 Because of their unbelief in Him, Jesus felt that it was of little use to do the miraculous works of the Father in His home town. If He had, they would, as the Gaderenes, have asked Him to leave, for they did not at this time understand who He really was (Lk 8:37). The miracles were used to confirm the spoken word of God (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). However, where there was no searching for truth in the hearts of men, there is no need to uselessly confirm the spoken word. By leaving the area because they did not believe, Jesus was emphasizing that believing in His teaching was more important than working miracles. These of Jesus' home town would not have believed Him even if He would have worked many miracles among them (Mk 6:5,6). The great power of a prejudiced mind is certainly manifested in this and other cases where people refused to believe in the miraculous works He worked in order to prove that He was from God (Jn

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3:2). Israel as a nation experienced the wonders of God when she was delivered from Egyptian captivity. However, when at Sinai, the Israelites rebelled against God. Miracles, therefore, are not a guarantee that one will accept the word of God. The religious leaders of Jerusalem experienced the miracles of Jesus. However, they rejected Him as the Messiah of Israel (See comments At 4:14-16). Reception of God's word depends on one's heart.

Chapter 14

HEROD & JOHN

(Mk 6:14-29; Lk 9:7-9)

14:1,2 Herod: This is Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great (Mk 8:15; Lk 3:1,19; 8:3; 13:31; At 4:27; 12:1). Herod Antipas divorced his own wife and married his own niece, Herodias, who was the wife of his half-brother, Herod Philip II. **Tetrarch:** This Greek word refers to the ruler of a fourth part of the kingdom. When Herod the Great died, his kingdom was divided among his sons. **John the Baptist:** See 16:14; Mk 6:14. Herod had earlier beheaded John. In this situation, Herod could have been stricken with a guilty conscience concerning what he had done to John, for Herod had believed that John was a good man, and thus tried to keep him safe (Mk 6:20). There was also gossip going around that Jesus was the resurrected John the Baptist (Lk 9:7), or possibly a resurrected Old Testament prophet (Mk 6:16; see Mt 16:13,14).

14:3,4 Mark's account of these events is given in more detail. John was imprisoned soon after the beginning of Jesus' ministry. **Herodias:** See Mk 6:17-22; Lk 3:19. Herodias was the granddaughter of Herod the Great. She divorced Philip in order to marry Herod Antipas. **It is not lawful:** According to Sinai law, it was unlawful for Herod to be married to Herodias (See Lv 18:14-16; 20:21; Dt 25:5-10). Therefore, this incestuous marriage was boldly condemned by John. Such indicates the bravery of John's character. He was willing to stand up against that which was wrong, regardless of the consequences.

14:5-9 They considered him as a prophet: Herod considered John with great respect and the people considered him a prophet. But regardless of all this consideration, Herod had to fulfill his foolish promise that he had made to a wicked woman (Mk 6:22). Therefore, as a result of the lust of one man for a woman, John the Baptist was put to death. **Birthdays:** The lords, captains and chief men of Herod's kingdom were present at this occasion (Mk 6:21). **Pleased Herod:** This was a lascivious dance by Herod's step daughter, Salome, who eventually married Philip the tetrarch. **He promised:** This is not the promise a good king would make. It was a careless oath made because of lust, and was kept in order to save face with the surrounding company of pompous friends. The text here reveals that John's death was schemed by Herodias. Though Herod had finally come to his senses, he had to keep his promise and save face before his royal guests.

14:10-12 Matthew informs us concerning what subsequently hap-

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pened. There is no grief or sorrow expressed in these historical words of Matthew, thus indicating that this was an inspired account and not the account of a man. John had completed his ministry, and it was time for him to depart from the scene. We see in this event God again turning into good the work of Satan to use evil men.

FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

(Mk 6:30-44; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-13)

14:13-15 *When Jesus heard of it:* The disciples came to tell Jesus all that had happened to John. To a deserted place: Jesus knew that the disciples needed solitude, for many of them had first believed because of John's preaching. They withdrew across the sea of Galilee (Jn 6:1,2) to a quiet place for meditation and prayer (Mk 6:30,31). **Moved with compassion:** Jesus was a leader with compassion for the multitudes. On this occasion, His healing of the sick was motivated by His compassion (15:32; 20:34; Mk 6:34). **Send the multitudes away:** This occasion leads to the only miracle that Jesus worked that is recorded in all four records of the gospel.

14:16-21 *You give them something to eat:* Jesus asked Philip where they were going to get food in order to feed so many people (Jn 6:5,6). Jesus asked the question in order to stimulate a faith response from Philip and the others. Jesus allowed them time to search for food to feed the people. Among the disciples, or among the multitude, they came up with only five loaves of bread and two fish. The disciples suggested that someone go into the city and buy food (Lk 9:10-17). The multitude of about five thousand men, plus women and children, were asked to sit down in groups of fifty for an orderly distribution (Mk 6:40). **Blessed and broke ... gave:** Jesus thanked the Father for the food (Jn 6:11). Such left a good example for the disciples in the years to come to do likewise concerning the blessing of food (1 Tm 4:4,5). **They took up twelve baskets full:** This miracle was unique. Jesus asked them to take up the leftovers in order to impress on the minds of the disciples that this was a miracle of creation. They knew how much bread and fish they started with and how much was left over. The only deduction they could make was that bread and fish had been created by God who was in their midst. Later in His ministry when He wanted to confirm who He was in the minds of the disciples, Jesus asked them to recall this miracle and a second feeding of four thousand in 15:32-38 (See 16:8-19; see Jn 6:27-59 where Jesus discussed the "bread of life," which discussion resulted from this miracle.)

THE STORM AT SEA

(Mk 6:45-52; Jn 6:14-21)

14:22,23 *Made His disciples get into a boat:* It was now late in the day after the feeding of the five thousand on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The Greek text emphasizes the fact that Jesus strongly urged the disciples to leave Him in order that He might go into a mountain and pray (Jn 6:15; Lk 9:28). **Other side:** He urged them to go to the

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northwestern side of the Sea of Galilee. Because the great miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 stimulated the multitudes to try and make Jesus their king on earth, He sent both the disciples and multitudes away (Jn 6:15). Even the disciples believed at this time that Jesus was the prophesied prophet (Dt 18:15) who would, according to the traditional teaching of the Rabbis, become a king on this earth (See comments At 1:6). But they were mistaken, not understanding the nature of the kingship of the Messiah, or His kingdom reign. **He was there alone:** There are times when Jesus needed to be alone (Jn 6:16). At this time, He needed to be alone for physical rest, but also that the zeal of the multitudes be calmed lest they do something irrational in reference to their obsession with Him as a leader. We must keep in mind that the Jews at this time were politically zealous, and thus would have forced Him into being a king.

14:24,25 The disciples were now in the middle of the Sea of Galilee and about four or five kilometers from the shore (Jn 6:19). **Fourth watch:** According to the Roman accounting of time, this was between 3:00 and 6:00 in the morning. They had thus been rowing almost all night against the wind. **Walking on the sea:** Jesus knew their predicament. He thus came to them with a miracle that manifests His power over natural law.

14:26-30 It is a ghost: The disciples were afraid because they thought they were seeing the manifestation of a spirit (See Lk 24:37). They too were afraid of the unknown. **It is I:** The Greek text literally says, "I am" (See Ex 3:14; Is 41:4). Jesus was the manifestation of the great "I Am" who was in their midst. The presence of Jesus surely brought them peace of mind in the midst of a scary night (Compare 17:7; 28:10; Jn 6:20; Rv 1:17). **Lord, if it is You:** This could be translated, "Since it is You" Peter's limited faith in the power of Jesus was manifested since he asked that Jesus command that he also walk on the water. And Peter did walk on the water. We do not know how far he came to Jesus before his faith began to waver because he took his eyes off Jesus. His fear overpowered his faith, and thus, he began to sink rapidly. When he lost his focus on Jesus, and focused on the environment, he lost faith in the power of Jesus to sustain him on the water.

14:31-33 Jesus stretched out His hand: Peter came close to Jesus. He was close enough for Jesus to reach out and save him. In the midst of stormy trials, all men should reach for the outstretched hand of Jesus. **O you of little faith:** For lack of faith, Peter failed to continue walking on the water. He thus deserved the rebuke. Nevertheless, man's inability to cope with the turmoil of his environment allows God the opportunity to stretch out His helping hand. What men must do is reach up to God (See 6:30; 8:26; 16:9). **Worshiped Him:** Recognition of the divine presence of God motivates worship. People often do not worship God because they have no realization of the presence of God. **Truly You are the Son of God:** See 16:16; 26:63; Mk 1:1; Lk 4:41; Jn 1:49; 6:69; 11:27; At 8:37; Rm 1:4. This miracle of Jesus greatly increased the faith of the disciples. Matthew, who was personally there, gives us this testimony of one of the greatest miraculous events in the life of Jesus. Jesus was more than a

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good teacher of ancient Palestine. The fact that He could create by feeding the multitudes, and have power over the laws of nature, boldly affirms that He was God on earth. And when one realizes the closeness of God, the natural response is worship.

AT GENNESARET

(Mk 6:53-56)

14:34-36 Gennesaret: This word means, "garden of the prince." It was on the west side of the Sea of Galilee and south of Capernaum (Mk 6:53). The people recognized that Jesus had the power to heal their sickness. They seem to have been more concerned about healing than the spiritual blessing that would come from the teachings of Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus granted them their wishes by healing them. **Perfectly whole:** Contrary to the fake healings of modern-day counterfeits, Jesus' healing of the sick and lame was complete. They were completely healed (See Mk 5:24-34; Lk 6:19).

Chapter 15

CONDEMNATION OF RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

(Mk 7:1-23)

The events that are recorded from this point on in the book occurred during the last year of Jesus' three and a half years ministry.

15:1,2 Tradition of the elders: The disciples were violating a religious tradition that had been handed down from the Jewish fathers (See comments Mk 7:1-9). This and many other religious traditions of the Jews were not a part of the Sinai law. They had simply become a part of the religious behavior of the Jews that was taught and enforced by the religious leadership. **Do not wash:** This was a ceremonial washing. It was good to wash one's hands before eating after coming from the market place. However, to bind such a religious tradition on the consciences of men, was adding to God's will. They were making a custom that was good, a part of their religious behavior, and by doing such, teaching the people to obey the tradition as law.

15:3 Transgress the commandment of God: By adding human religious traditions to the law of God, the religious leaders were actually transgressing God's law. Not only does the adding of such traditions assume that the law is insufficient, men start honoring the traditions above the law (See 2 Tm 3:16,17). They progress to the point of ignoring and rejecting the law of God in order to keep their traditions (Mk 7:9). It is not wrong to do things traditionally in the realm of religious behavior. However, when the traditional way of doing something becomes the only way it can be done, then the tradition has become a binding law on the consciences of men. It is then wrong. In this way, the religious traditions of the world in which we live have brought thousands into bondage (See At 15:10; Gl 5:1). People have a difficult time objectively studying and applying the teachings of the Bible because they are hindered by their traditional religiosity.

15:4,5 In these two verses Jesus gives an example of the contra-

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diction between God's law and the religious traditions of the scribes and Pharisees. Verse 4 states that one must honor his father and mother by taking care of them. Verse 4 also states God's law that if one spoke evil of either father or mother he or she was to be stoned (Ex 20:12; 21:17; Dt 5:16; 27:16). However, the scribes and Pharisees changed the law. They said that the material possessions owned by the children did not have to be used to help their aged parents. They did not have to give their possessions in order to take care of their parents if the possessions were pronounced "corban" (Mk 7:11), that is, "given to God." When something was "corban" it was set apart by a formal vow to be used in service to God. That which had been set aside for religious purposes went to the support of those whom Jesus was here addressing. In other words, these selfish religious leaders were binding their traditional laws on Israelites who had parents who needed help. The children could not help their parents because their goods had been promised to these selfish religious leaders. The religious leaders considered their own support more important than the children's responsibility to take care of their parents.

15:6,7 *Of no effect by your tradition:* They had rejected the commandment of God concerning the children's responsibility toward parents by binding on the consciences of the children their religious traditions. In this way, the commandment of God was not effective in the lives of the children to take care of their parents. ***Hypocrites:*** In their legalistic approach to religion, they manifested their own hypocrisy. They made sure that the actions of the children were according to their laws, but in reality, the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees were far from God. Such is the case with all legalistic religions. As long as one performs the statutes of the law in these religions, one's heart can go unchecked (See intro. to GI).

15:8,9 *Their heart is far from Me:* See Is 29:13; Mk 7:9; Cl 2:18-22; Ti 1:14. Their lips proclaimed religious proclamations, but their hearts were full of evil. Legalistic religion deceives one into believing that as long as he performs the statutes of the law, his heart can remain unchecked, and thus, be far from God. ***In vain do they worship Me:*** They had deceived themselves into believing that they were worshiping God acceptably after their own invented religious behavior. They had created a religion after their own traditions, and then, led themselves to believe that God was pleased with their worship. When men seek to construct worship of God after their own desires, they end up worshiping God in vain (See Cl 2:18-22; Ti 1:14). They often end up creating a god after their own image, one whom they believe condones their vain worship.

15:10,11 The multitudes were willing to follow the religious traditions of the scribes and Pharisees. However, Jesus turns His attention to those who are willing to be led astray by the traditional religions of blind religious leaders. In the context of what the scribes and Pharisees were accusing the disciples in verse 2, Jesus affirmed that what goes into the body through the mouth does not spiritually defile the person. But evil words that come out of the mouth through speech defiles the man because such is the action of an evil heart (Compare At 10:15; Rm 14:14,17,20; 1 Tm

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4:4). Evil hearts are always revealed through one's speech.

15:12,13 *The Pharisees were offended:* The Pharisees were offended because Jesus had publicly pointed out the hypocritical system of religion that they practiced and bound on the consciences of men. ***Every plant:*** The Father did not plant either the scribes or Pharisees with their religion. Both will be rooted out of His people when the truth of the gospel is preached. This would begin in Jerusalem in Acts 2 (Compare comments Gl 4:30; 5:12).

15:14 *Let them alone:* This was good advice that Jesus gave to the disciples. Christians should shun those religious leaders who have given themselves over to creating religion after their own misguided desires (See comments 7:6). ***They are blind leaders:*** See 23:16,24; Is 9:16; Mt 2:8; Lk 6:39; Jn 9:40. The scribes and Pharisees were blind religious leaders in the sense that they had rejected the commandment of God in order to keep their own religious traditions that had been handed down from the fathers (See Mk 7:1-9). They legally concentrated on the outward appearance of religious ceremonies, but failed to check their own hearts. Those who are intimidated to follow after the leadership of those who are spiritually blind will also reap the same consequences as their leaders (See 2 Pt 1:9). Religious leaders who do not know the word of God, are blind guides who lead people according to religious traditions. Such leaders maintain their validation before the people through the authority of their traditions, rather than the authority of the word of God.

15:15 *Explain ... this parable:* The disciples did not understand because they were also the victims of their religious environment. They were brought up in the doctrines and traditions of men, and thus, at times had difficulty understanding the truth and grace that was being revealed through Jesus.

15:16 See 16:9. Mark records that all the disciples questioned Jesus because of their lack of understanding (Mk 7:17,18). They had given their allegiance to Jesus, however, they were still the victims of their religious heritage.

15:17-20 There is nothing in food that would spiritually or morally defile a person (1 Co 6:13; see 7:20; compare 13:34). But the things that are spoken by the mouth betray what is in the heart of the man. ***For out of the heart:*** The heart is the origin of all sin (Jn 1:14,15). What is spoken from the mouth identifies the nature of the heart. The problem with the legalistic religious system of the scribes and Pharisees was that the religion focused on the outward performance of the religion and not on the heart of the man (See intro. to Gl).

HEALING A MOTHER'S DAUGHTER

(Mk 7:24-30)

15:21,22 Jesus again sought rest. He withdrew into a house in the area of Tyre and Sidon (Mk 7:24). This was a country that was under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas. The area of Tyre and Sidon was a Gentile area, and thus, the ministry of Jesus extended beyond the Jews. His

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teaching in areas of the Gentiles would not have been approved by the Jewish religious leaders. **Woman of Canaan:** This was a Greek woman, a Syrophenician (Mk 7:26). She was a Gentile. **Son of David:** See 1:1; 20:30,31; 22:41,42. Here is a confession that Jesus is the Son of Man, the Messiah of Israel. The fact that this woman in the area of Tyre and Sidon came making this confession is evidence that the knowledge of who Jesus was had spread even to Gentile regions. **Possessed:** See comments 4:24.

15:23,24 He did not answer her a word: Jesus did not answer her in order to teach the disciples a lesson. It was their Jewish prejudice that made them unwilling to heal her. The lesson Jesus was trying to teach was that all must be reached regardless of their nationality (See 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). Jesus' refusal to answer the woman gave them the opportunity to reflect on their inward prejudice feelings. The woman's cries annoyed them because they were prejudiced against the Gentiles. **Lost sheep of the house of Israel:** Jesus' earthly mission was primarily to the Jews, for it was to them that God had prophesied the Messiah (10:5,6). The disciples would have been pleased with this statement, for they were prejudiced against the Gentiles. It must always be the work of the disciple of Jesus to seek those who have the faith of Abraham, and desire to know more.

15:25 Without any arguments, the woman simply poured out her worship of Jesus (See 8:2). We cannot help but believe that Jesus knew her heart, and thus, He knew that she would behave in this manner toward Him. She thus presented herself in a manner that would break down the prejudice of the disciples.

15:26-28 Jesus continued to show the hardness that was in the hearts of the Jews toward the Gentiles. At this time in the incident, surely the disciples were beginning to realize their own prejudices, and thus, were even thinking in themselves that something must be done for the woman. **Crumbs that fall:** If at this stage in the incident the disciples were still hardened against the pleas of the woman, then they were men of no compassion, and thus, would have disqualified themselves as disciples of Jesus. The willingness of the woman to accept the most humble blessings from Jesus was certainly a rebuke to their Jewish pride. **O woman, great is your faith:** Jesus now relinquished to the pleas by proclaiming to the disciples the great faith of the woman (8:10; 9:22). We conclude that the disciples were embarrassed with themselves as they saw their own hardness of heart melt into compassion for this Gentile woman and her beloved daughter.

FEEDING THE FOUR THOUSAND

(Mk 7:31 – 8:9)

15:29,30 At this time in Jesus' ministry the multitudes were continually with Him because of the publicized power of His healing (See Is 35:5,6). He now goes around the Sea of Galilee and up a mountain in order to offer the opportunity for the multitudes to come to Him. In doing this, He

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was taking the multitudes away from their environment for a retreat to a mountain for teaching. Jesus led them to this location in order that they be in a situation where they could concentrate on His teaching. In order that they be prepared for the teaching, Jesus healed all the physically deformed who were in the group. **Lame:** These are those with deformed limbs (At 3:2). **Mute:** These are those who could not speak because they could not hear. **Crippled:** Those who had suffered injury to body limbs. We can know that these were true miracles because the people witnessed that those who were healed had real deformities. There was no subjective decisions made concerning their healing. Everyone could see that they were healed.

15:31 The multitude marveled: The healing of all who had physical deformities prepared the minds of the multitude in that they were now fully aware of Jesus' power from God (See Jn 3:2; 20:30,31; Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). The miracles proved that the messenger of God was in their midst, and thus, they should listen. The result of the healing was that they glorified God (Lk 5:25,26).

15:32 Jesus not only had compassion on their physical infirmities (9:36), He also had compassion on their physical necessities. **Three days and have nothing to eat:** The people had been so enthralled with Jesus' healing and teaching that they had forgotten about food. It was a retreat where all fasted because of their concentration on the work and teaching of the Son of God.

15:33-39 See the feeding of the five thousand in 14:14-21. Jesus asked the disciples where they could get food to feed this multitude. He thus prepared their minds for the miraculous feeding. **Where would we get enough bread in the wilderness:** It seems that the disciples had soon forgotten the feeding of the five thousand. **Seven baskets full:** A miracle of creation is again worked in the lives of the disciples. The disciples were to realize that the One who had created the universe and all that is in it was standing in their midst (See Cl 1:16; see comments 14:15-20; 16:8-13). They could accept Jesus as the Messiah. However, their acceptance of Him must go beyond His messiahship. He must be accepted as the Son of God, the Creator of the world. Jesus must be accepted for being nothing less. If He is, then the impact He would have on one's heart is not what God intended. He is the Messiah and Son of God (See comments 16:12-19). **Magadan:** This could be spelled "Magadan" or "Maddala." This was the place from which Mary Magdalene had received her name. Mark refers to this area as Dalmanutha (Mk 8:10).

Chapter 16

ATTACK OF THE PHARISEES & SADDUCEES

(Mk 8:11,12)

16:1 The Pharisees and Sadducees theologically disagreed with one another. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, the soul, or the afterlife (22:23; At 23:8). However, on this occasion both groups were united in their attack against Jesus (Lk 23:12). Their com-

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mon enemy brought them together. **Testing Him:** These religious leaders were not seeking either teaching or wisdom from Jesus. They had already seen many miracles and heard the reports of many more. Nevertheless, their desire for position among the people, and their allegiance to their own traditions, blinded them as to who Jesus was and what He taught (See Jn 3:2). They came with the motive to disprove that Jesus was the Messiah because they saw the great multitudes of people who were now accepting Jesus as the Messiah.

16:2,3 Jesus exposed the evil motives of the Pharisees and Sadducees. They had common sense to discern the signs of the weather and its changes. However, they did not have enough spiritual sense to discern that the signs of Jesus' work indicated that a great change was coming in the near future. Their preconceived ideas that were based on their religious traditions and positions had clouded their minds. We must never underestimate the power traditional thinking has over an individual to cloud his objectivity in accepting that which is truth.

16:4 **A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign:** See comments 12:38-40. They had committed themselves to follow after their own religious traditions, and in doing so, they rejected the commandments of God. They had thus committed spiritual adultery (See 15:8,9; Mk 7:6-9). Such a commitment to religious traditions hindered them from accepting the clear truth that the Son of God was in their midst. Mark records that this greatly grieved Jesus (Mk 8:12). **Sign of Jonah:** See 12:38-40. **And He left them:** It is senseless to cast pearls before swine (See 7:6). There comes a time in one's efforts to reach a lost person that he must make a decision to move on from a hardened heart. It is useless to strive about theologies when one's mind is set in the tradition of the fathers. On this occasion, Jesus simply left these Pharisees and Sadducees, for their hearts were hardened against Him. However, some came to accept Him, one being the apostle Paul. When people reject the gospel, it is then that they have counted themselves unworthy of the gospel.

WARNING CONCERNING THE LEAVEN

(Mk 8:13-26)

16:5,6 **Forgotten to take bread:** The disciples were enthralled in the teaching and work of Jesus. As a result, they forgot physical necessities in order to concentrate on spiritual food. They had only one loaf of bread left (Mk 8:14). **Beware:** Jesus again takes an opportunity to teach concerning the evil influences and teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees as a whole (See 15:12-20). **Leaven:** Or, yeast. It is the nature of yeast to spread throughout the bread. In the same manner, the teachings and influence of the legalistic system of religion of the Pharisees was spreading among the hearts of the people (15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9; see comments intro. to Gl).

16:7,8 **Reasoned among themselves:** The disciples are now cautious because of former rebukes. They thus discuss the problem of no food among themselves lest they be rebuked for not bringing more food.

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O you of little faith: Jesus rebuked the disciples for their concern over material things. They deserved the rebuke because they did not perceive His teaching concerning the leavening evil influence of the Pharisees and Sadducees. He thus took another opportunity to impress on their minds the great impact the traditional religious teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees had on the Jewish society, and would have on them if they were not aware of such.

16:9,10 The Pharisees and Sadducees had tremendous influence on the society. Their leadership was very influential because they controlled the religious thought and educational institutions of the Jewish society. In this context, Jesus was moving the disciples' thinking toward the greater influence He will have because of who He was. He was moving them toward the confession of verse 16, that He was the Christ, the Son of God. In Matthew's record of these events and teachings, he is also moving us as readers to the same confession. Therefore, Jesus asked the disciples to recall a specific type of miracle that He worked with the feeding of the multitudes (14:16-21; 15:32-38). This type of miracle proved beyond any doubt the greatness of Jesus over any possible influence the Pharisees and Sadducees could possibly have in the world. Their influence was regional in the land of Palestine among the Jews. But Jesus' influence would be global and unto all nations.

16:11,12 Teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees: This is the teaching of these religious leaders that had permeated Jewish society. It was not the teaching of the Old Testament, but their teaching of the religious traditions of men that led them to reject the commandments of God (See comments 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9; Lk 12:1). The legalistic system of religious thought that was taught by the Pharisees and Sadducees was a system of religious thought that brought men into bondage (See At 15:10; see comments on legalism in the introduction to GI). It brought men into the bondage of a system of religiosity that led people away from God's word.

JESUS THE CHRIST & SON OF GOD

(Mk 8:27-30; Lk 9:18-21)

16:13 Caesarea Philippi: This city was in the northern extremity of Palestine at the foot of Mount Hermon. The city was built by Philip, one of Herod's sons, to honor Caesar Augustus. It was the ideal location where Jesus and the disciples could be away from the multitudes in order for Jesus to discuss the great subject that Matthew records for us in this chapter.

Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am: This was a turning point in the ministry of Jesus, for from the time of the confession He draws from the disciples on this occasion, He turned His face toward Jerusalem and the cross (vs 21). He thus asked the disciples this question in order to move them toward their own confession of who He was in verse 15.

16:14,15 Some say: Some may have been saying that Jesus was John the Baptist who was resurrected from the dead (See 14:1-3). Then others were saying that Jesus was the fulfillment of the belief that Elijah

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would be raised (17:10; See 2 Kg 1:1-12; Mk 6:15). **One of the prophets:** Many people accepted Jesus as a prophet, possibly one that had arisen from the dead. However, many failed to recognize Him as the Messiah and Son of God. In the context Jesus is not actually concerned about what people are saying about Him. He wants to know the inner beliefs of the disciples. Through the disciples the message of who He was would be proclaimed throughout the world. It was necessary, therefore, that they clearly understand who he was.

16:16 Impetuous Peter makes a confession that contains two facts concerning Jesus upon which faith must be founded. Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ (the Greek equivalent for the Messiah, the anointed one of Israel. See Jn 11:27) and the Son of God (See 14:33; Jn 6:69; 11:27; Hb 1:2,5; 1 Jn 4:15). Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah in that He fulfilled all prophecy concerning the Messiah. As the Son of God, Peter confessed that Jesus came from God (See 14:33; Jn 6:69; 11:27).

16:17 Blessed are you: "Bar" is the Syriac word for the Hebrew "Ben," which means "son of." Peter was the son of Jonah (Jn 1:42; 21:15-17). **Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you:** In this reference to men in general (1 Co 15:50; Gl 1:16; Ep 6:12; Hb 2:14), Jesus was saying that the content of Peter's confession was not revealed to him by the hearsay of men, for men did not accept Jesus as such. God made these things known to Peter (Jn 3:2; 5:36; 10:37,38; 14:11; 20:30,31). **Father who is in heaven:** At the time of these events, Jesus as God was on earth and the Father as God was in heaven. Jesus was the manifestation of God on earth to work the plan of redemption through His own sacrifice.

16:18 Peter: Peter's name (petros) is a Greek word that is masculine in gender. The word means a stone or rock (Jn 1:42). **Upon this rock:** The gender of this Greek word (*petra*) is feminine, and thus, does not refer to Peter whose name is masculine. The rock here is the fact that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God. **I will build My church:** The word "church" here is *ekklesia*. The word is used as a noun, whereas the verb form of *ekklesia* is also "assembly." In other words, the *ekklesia* ("church") assembles ("ekklesia"). The *ekklesia* regularly meets in *ekklesia*. Without understanding this use of the word *ekklesia* one is left with confusion concerning the *ekklesia* (church) of the disciples after Acts 2. The fact that people believe that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God, makes such the foundation upon which *ekklesia* (church) is built. Church would exist, therefore, because people believed that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God. As Christ, He fulfilled all Old Testament prophecy in reference to the Messiah (Lk 24:44). As the Son of God He was God on earth with the power and authority of God. **Church:** This word is from *ekklesia* and refers to people. The word refers to a called out assembly of people. The *ekklesia* is the called out assembly of God's people, whether in the Old Testament (At 7:38), or in the New Testament. Since the grammar of the statement that is here used by Jesus in the context is in the future tense, His *ekklesia* (church) was yet in the future. John the Baptist, about whom

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he speaks here, was already dead, and thus, was not in the *ekklesia* of Christ that was to come (See 14:1ff), though he was in the kingdom reign of the Father, which kingdom would later be transfused to the ascended Son. The *ekklesia* of Christ would be established when the first official announcement of the kingdom reign of Jesus would be made. Such was made on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 after the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God. When men responded to the kingdom reign of Jesus, therefore, the *ekklesia* of God's people was established (At 2:41,47). The *ekklesia* (church) on earth would be the manifestation of the kingdom reign of Jesus in heaven, which kingdom reign of Jesus began at the time of His ascension, about six days before Peter's first official announce of the gospel ascension. The church, therefore, was established after the kingdom reign of Jesus. The Jewish disciples understood the concept of the *ekklesia* of God's people, for they were the *ekklesia* of God in the Old Testament (At 7:38). However, many did not understand that Jesus would establish His own *ekklesia* (assembly). **The gates of Hades:** The gates of ancient cities were the most vulnerable part of the city. When a city was attacked by an enemy, the enemy attacked the gates. If the gates fell, the city fell. Therefore, the strength of the fortifications of a city depended on the strength of the gates. The word "gates" became a metaphor meaning power or strength. Hades is the unseen abode of the dead. What Jesus is here saying is that the strength or power of physical death would not prevail against the building and existence of the church. Physical death would not keep Him in the tomb, and thus, He would be raised in order to sit at the right hand of the Father and reign over all things (Ep 1:20-22). Neither would death keep His disciples in their tombs. They would eventually be raised from the dead (1 Th 4:13-18). His reign would be announced in Acts 2, and thus, the assembly of submitted hearts of the world that responded to Jesus' kingdom reign would be the church.

16:19 Jesus now turns to a different subject that is related to the church, but is not specifically the church. He turns from the people who would be the church, to His reign from heaven that would be announced in the near future. **Keys:** This is a metaphorical statement that refers to privilege or authority (See Is 22:22; Lk 11:52; Rv 1:18; 3:7; 9:1). Peter was given the privilege, and thus, the divine privilege to make the first official announcement of the kingdom reign of Jesus. He was the first apostle to stand up in Acts 2 and declare that Jesus was Lord and Christ (See comments At 2). **Kingdom of heaven:** Reference is to the sovereignty of Deity that proceeds from heaven. Kingdom reign, therefore, originates from God out of heaven. Church refers to people on earth who have responded to the reign of Jesus. When Peter made the first official announcement of the kingdom reign of Jesus in Acts 2, which kingdom was already in existence at the time the announcement was made, people on earth responded by obedience to the gospel (At 2:26-41). The church thus began when people first submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus. Church was established because kingdom reign had already been established by Jesus' ascension to reign to the right hand of God (See Dn 2:44; 7:13,14).

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Bind on earth ... loose on earth: The Greek text literally says, "Will have been bound ... will have been loosed." What the apostles spoke on earth in revelation of the truth, had already been bound in heaven, for the truth was revealed from heaven (See Jn 14:26; 16:13; 1 Co 14:37). The authority of binding and loosing truth was also given to all the apostles in 18:18 (See Jn 20:23). Therefore, in reference to the revelation of truth, Peter had no more authority or privilege than the rest of the apostles.

16:20 Tell no one: See 8:4; 17:9; Lk 9:21. Jesus did not want the disciples at this time to preach the subject of this personal discussion, for in this discussion He had claimed sonship and messiahship, which claim would at this time have motivated a radical religious mob to kill Him. Their going out and preaching this subject would have caused the social environment that Jesus was controlling to get out of hand. We must always keep in mind that Jesus was controlling public opinion, and especially the antagonism of the religious leaders, in order to take Himself to the cross (Jn 10:17,18). He would not suffer death at the hand of a mob. He would take Himself to the cross in order to lay down His life as the sacrificial Lamb for mankind. This would happen when He determined that it was time to go to the cross.

PROPHECY OF JESUS' DEATH (Mk 8:31-37; Lk 9:22-25)

16:21 From that time: Jesus knew that by this time in His ministry the disciples' faith in Him had grown. It had grown strong enough to accept the teaching concerning His death. **Suffer many things:** See 17:9,12,22ff; 20:18,19; 27:63. **Elders ... chief priests ... scribes:** It was the religious leaders who crucified Jesus. In this case a truth is illustrated. The power of misguided traditional religion directs people to do those things that are evil. The misguided zeal of religionists will often lead them to do those things that are not necessarily right according to their own beliefs.

16:22 Peter ... began to rebuke Him: Peter does not yet understand the necessity of the crucifixion. His ignorance of the plan of God to redeem man made it possible for Satan to use him on this occasion. Satan used Peter as Jesus' friend to dissuade Him from going to the cross. Though Satan did not understand the final purpose of Jesus, he knew that something was about to happen in reference to the crushing blow of his head that God had revealed to Adam and Eve (Gn 3:15). He thus attacked the Seed of woman through the persuasion of Peter to dissuade Jesus from His destiny.

16:23 Get behind Me, Satan: Though ignorantly, Peter played the part of Satan to divert Jesus from the cross. Satan was using Peter's love and concern for Jesus as an appeal to cause Jesus to stumble in His destiny. Today, too many friends and family use their appeal, as Peter, to discourage men and women from going into all the world to preach the gospel. One of the works of Satan is to use the good intentions of brethren in order to dissuade the destiny of those who seek to serve the Lord. **The things of God:** Peter did not understand the plan of God to save man

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through the cross. However, he would later understand, which things he wrote in 1 Peter 2:24.

16:24 Take up his cross: In the context of the discussion of His own suffering on the cross, Jesus now turns to the future of the disciples (See 10:38). The true disciple of Jesus must be willing to endure the same sufferings as the Teacher. When one lives after the manner that Jesus instructed His disciples, persecution will come (2 Tm 3:12; 1 Pt 2:21; 4:16).

16:25 See 10:39; Lk 17:33; Jn 12:25. If one desires to live after the world in order to save his life, then he will lose it (Rm 6:16,17). If one denies Christ in order to save himself, in the end he will lose his life. The one who gives himself to the Lord will gain eternal life in the end (Mk 10:29,30; 2 Pt 1:3,4). Those who crucify themselves, and allow Jesus to control their lives, will live eternally with Him (Gl 2:20).

16:26 The value of one's soul is beyond comparison with anything of this world. If one owned all that is of this world, such would not profit toward the salvation of his soul. If we truly comprehend the value of our eternal salvation, we would not trade anything of this world for it (See Lk 12:20,21). If we understood the glory that will be revealed to us, we would understand the foolishness of clinging to this world in a manner that would divert us from Jesus (Rm 8:18).

16:27 The Son of Man will come: The Son of Man, the Messiah, was standing in their midst. In view of the context of verse 28, reference here is to the coming of the Son of Man in time. Jesus came in time in judgment of this world by the revelation of the gospel. He came with His messengers (See 10:23; 26:64; Mk 8:38; 9:1; Lk 9:26). The prophecies of Daniel 7:10 and Zechariah 14:5 describe the coming of the Lord with His angels in order to establish His kingdom reign. Therefore, this judgment has in view those who would either obey or reject the gospel of Jesus. One's acceptance or rejection of the gospel had eternal consequences that would be made known in the final judgment (See Rm 2:6; 14:12; 2 Co 5:10; Ep 6:8).

16:28 Some of Jesus' immediate disciples would not die until they saw the presence of Jesus in His kingdom reign (Mk 9:1; Lk 9:27; see comments At 7:54-56). **Coming:** This Greek word could be translated "presence." The presence of the power of the kingdom reign was manifested in the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles in Acts 2 (See Mk 9:1; Jn 14:26; 16:13; At 1:8). God's presence is always manifested in the miraculous.

Chapter 17

THE TRANSFIGURATION

(Mk 9:2-13; Lk 9:28-36)

17:1 After six days: Luke says eight days (Lk 9:28). The Jews counted any part of a day to represent a whole day. Therefore, by counting the partial beginning and ending of two days, with six full days, we would have the eight days of Luke. **Peter, James and John:** Though Jesus worked with all twelve disciples, it seems that special attention was given to these

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three (See 26:37; Mk 5:37; Lk 8:51). Jesus thus gives Peter, James and John the privilege of this exceptional event. He knows they will eventually relate the happenings of this event to others. By inspiration, Matthew is here revealing to us what happened on this unique occasion. **High mountain:** Most Bible students believe that this was Mount Hermon which was in the northern part of Palestine (See 2 Pt 1:17,18). This mountain is about 2,700 meters high (about 9,000 feet). Some believe this may have been Mount Tabor.

17:2,3 Transfigured: This word means to be changed or transformed. In some way Jesus' appearance was changed into a state of heavenly glory in order to manifest His deity (Jn 1:14). **Moses and Elijah appeared to them:** Moses was the lawgiver to Israel, and thus, represented the law (Jn 1:17). However, Peter, James and John are to be shown that they should now listen to Jesus. Elijah was the great prophet of Israel, and thus, represented the prophets. Again, the three witnesses are to listen to Jesus. **Talking:** They were talking of the fulfillment of the purpose for which both Moses and Elijah came to do their work. They were talking about the fulfillment of the seedline promise that started with the seed of woman in Eve, and had continued to Jesus (Lk 9:31). The seedline had been preserved throughout history in order that Jesus, the seed of woman (Gn 3:15), go to the cross.

17:4,5 All three disciples were suddenly awakened (Lk 9:32,33). Peter was probably not fully conscious of what he was saying when he made the suggestion of the tabernacles. **Tabernacles:** This would be "booths" or "tents." According to the tradition of the Jews, these would have been temporary dwellings of prayer and meditation according to the teachings of Leviticus 23:34 and Exodus 25:8,9. Peter may have been suggesting that places of honor be placed at the location to honor Jesus, Moses and Elijah. **This is My beloved Son ... hear Him:** Moses and Elijah represented the Sinai covenant and law that God had with Israel. But here God announces that Jesus is to be heard and obeyed (3:17; 12:18; Hb 1:1,2; 10:9,10; see 2 Pt 1:16-18). Thus the Sinai covenant and law were in the process of passing away because of their fulfillment (See 5:17,18). Jesus was the Prophet to whom they must now give heed (Dt 18:14ff ; At 3:22,23). This heavenly proclamation and affirmation was meant to signal Jesus as God's final prophet through whom He would call all people to Himself. Jesus was more than a prophet. He came to do the work of a prophet as Moses and Elijah. However, this proclamation from heaven affirms that He is the Son of God. No other prophet assumed to be the Son of God.

17:6-8 When the disciples heard the voice of God, the natural reaction was worship (Dn 8:17; Rv 1:17; see 2 Pt 1:18). Prophets were not worshiped. Because Jesus was God, all three witnesses worshiped as a natural response of their realization of the presence of God. After the fearful event of hearing the voice of God, Jesus reassured the disciples. They had prostrated their bodies on the ground during the fearful experience and raised them only when Jesus spoke.

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17:9 Tell the vision to no one: At this time in the ministry, Peter, James and John did not believe that Jesus would soon die, and certainly, not in His resurrection from the dead (Mk 9:10). What they saw and heard here, they did not fully understand. Therefore, they were not to speak of this event until after Jesus had been raised from the dead (Compare 8:4). If this event was spoken of publicly at this time in Jesus' ministry, there would have been unnecessary confusion. The other disciples would also possibly have become envious of Peter, James and John for having the special experience (Compare Mk 9:34; Lk 22:24).

17:10-13 The scribes had correctly interpreted the Sinai law concerning the prophecies that a messenger must first come before the coming of the Messiah (See Is 40:3; MI 3:1; 4:5; Mt 11:14). **Restore all things:** The prophecies were of John the Baptist who came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Lk 1:16,17). He came preaching repentance and baptism for remission of sins (Mk 1:1-4). However, the Jews failed to see the fulfillment of prophecy in John. **The Son of Man will also suffer at their hands:** As the Jews did not recognize John as the fulfillment of prophecy in preparation for the Messiah, so they would not recognize Jesus (Jn 1:11). They would thus crucify Him because of their refusal to believe and accept Him as the Messiah, and particularly because of His claim to be the Son of God (Mk 9:12).

FAITH & HEALING A DEMONIAIC BOY (Mk 9:14-29; Lk 9:37-43)

17:14-16 Jesus, Peter, James and John had remained part of a day and night on the mountain of transfiguration (Lk 9:37). While Jesus was on the mountain, the scribes were entering into an argument with the other disciples (Mk 9:14). **Lord, have mercy on my son:** The disciples were not able to cast out the demon from his son because of their lack of faith (vss 19,20). **An epileptic:** Most translations read "epileptic," which is a physical brain disorder that causes sudden seizures, unconsciousness and loss of body control.

17:17,18 Mark gives an extended account of the events surrounding the exorcism. **O faithless and perverse generation:** Jesus makes this indictment of all who were present. All were still having a hard time accepting Him as the Messiah and Son of God. **Jesus rebuked the demon:** Mark records that the demon caused epileptic fits that would cause the boy to cast himself into fires (Mk 9:20). Jesus said on this occasion that all things are possible to those who believe (Mk 9:23). Therefore, this healing was a test of Jesus' divine power in contrast to the lack of power in the disciples because of their lack of faith. **Rebuked:** See Lk 4:41. Jesus had total control over the world of Satan and his works (See comments 4:24). Because of Jesus' command, the demon immediately left the boy (See Mk 9:26). There were no potions, performances or ceremonies in order to exorcise this demon. Jesus simply spoke and it was done.

17:19-21 The disciples came to Jesus privately: The disciples seem to be somewhat perplexed over their inability to take care of the de-

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mon possessed boy. **Because of your little faith:** It was unbelief on their part, not on the part of the one who was healed. They could have cast out the demon because Jesus had given them such authority. However, the qualification for being able to command the power of the supernatural demanded that they believe (19:26; 21:21-22; Lk 10:1,17). **Faith the size of a mustard seed:** See 21:21,22; Mk 11:23,24; Lk 17:6; 1 Co 12:9; 13:2. At this time in the ministry of Jesus, they had only the seed of faith. Their faith was filled with doubts and fears. But this would change. They would grow to a non-doubting faith that would lead them to do great things for God. **Prayer:** Mark says much prayer (Mk 9:29). Jesus said that much prayer must be added to the ability to command the power of God. **Nothing will be impossible to you:** Nothing would be impossible to them for nothing is impossible for the One who actually does the miraculous work (Mk 9:23; Jn 11:40). Keep in mind that in this context Jesus was not talking to all the disciples, but only to the twelve. He was promising them special authority in reference to their work as His personally chosen and sent apostles.

17:22,23 See Mk 9:30-32; Lk 9:43-45. From the time of His ministry that is recorded in 16:21, Jesus began to explain to the disciples that He was headed for the cross. It was difficult for them to accept this destiny because they still had in their minds the belief that Jesus was going to be an earthly king of Israel and reign on this earth. They maintained this belief even to the days immediately before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 (See At 1:6). **Exceedingly sorrowful:** When Jesus spoke of His death, the subject did not bring them any comfort (Jn 16:6; 19:30). They knew something was going to happen, but did not understand. They believed His words when He spoke of His death, and thus, were sorrowful. However, they did not believe His words concerning His resurrection. If they had believed His words concerning His resurrection, then they would have been joyful. We must also keep in mind that the mystery of the gospel was not known by anyone other than God Himself. Even Satan did not know what was about to be revealed on the cross (See 1 Pt 1:10-12).

THE TEMPLE TAX

17:24-27 Tax: This was the amount of a half-shekel. The Greek word is "didrachma." This was the Jewish temple tax of about two days' wages that was bound on the Jews in order to maintain the temple. It was paid yearly, about a month before Passover, in order to support those who worked with the religious services of the temple (See Ex 30:13,14). **Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax:** The question was undoubtedly asked Peter in order to bring an accusation against Jesus. Yes: Peter affirmed that Jesus paid the tax, though he evidently had not seen Jesus do so. **Sons are exempt:** The sons of the king are free from paying the taxes. However, the subjects of the king must pay. Since Jesus is greater than the temple because He was the Son of God, then He would not be subject to pay the tax to the temple. Jesus thus claimed sonship of God in this statement. **Lest we should offend them:** In order to avoid unnecessary controversy concerning the payment of the tax, Jesus miraculously

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provided the money to pay the tax. Peter had to pay the tax. He, as well as all Jews, were subject to paying the tax. **Stater coin:** Some translate this “shekel,” which is from the Greek word “stater.” This is the exact amount of the temple tax for two people.

Chapter 18 GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM (Mk 9:33-50; Lk 9:46-50)

18:1 *Greatest in the kingdom:* The question of this verse was asked on the basis that the disciples believed that the kingdom would be a physical kingdom of this world (See comments At 1:6). Selfish ambition for position of leadership after the thinking of this world continually plagued the disciples throughout the ministry of Jesus (See comments Mk 10:35-45). This is one of at least three times this subject came up during the time the apostles were with Jesus (See 20:20-28; Mk 9:33,34; 10:35-45; Lk 22:24-27). However, after the events of Acts 2, and throughout their ministry, they learned the nature of servanthood leadership in the spiritual kingdom. In this kingdom of Jesus, there would be only one head with all authority, and one King (28:12; Ep 1:20-23).

18:2-5 *Unless you are converted:* The Greek text says that they must turn in their thinking and lives (See At 3:19; 28:27). ***Become as little children:*** One must have the attitude of submissive little children in order to be of the spiritual nature that is necessary to enter the spiritual kingdom (See Js 4:6,7; 1 Pt 5:6,7; compare 1 Co 14:20; 1 Pt 2:2; compare also 19:14; 20:27; 23:11; Ps 131:2; Mk 10:15; Lk 18:17). ***Whoever will humble himself:*** This is the servanthood leadership that is characteristic of those who submit to the needs of others (See comments Mk 10:35-45). ***Whoever receives:*** If one receives a disciple of Jesus who is of the disposition and character of what Jesus discusses in this context, he receives Jesus (10:40-42).

18:6,7 *Causes ... to stumble:* Those who persecute Christians in order to cause them to stumble, will be held accountable (See Lk 17:2). ***Millstone:*** This is a great stone of many kilograms in weight that was used to grind grain into flour. Jesus' emphasis here is that there will be no deliverance for those who seek to cause His disciples to fall. God is now patient with those who persecute Christians. However, He will eventually bring severe punishment on those who have caused harm to come to His flock (Dt 32:35; Rm 12:19; Hb 10:30). ***Woe to the world because of offenses:*** The pronouncement of “woe” by God upon rebellious men and women is a sign of sure condemnation for rebellion against God. Specific condemnation is here pronounced by Jesus upon those who cause others to sin (Lk 17:1; 1 Co 11:19; 1 Tm 4:1).

18:8,9 *Cut it off:* Jesus did not mean that one literally cut off one of the limbs of his body. He uses a figure of speech in order to emphasize the seriousness by which one must consider those things that would cause him to fall. In this context where the disciples are having problems with selfish ambition concerning greatness, He emphasizes the fact that they should

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seriously consider this attitude, lest it lead to their condemnation. Carnal attitudes with reference to leadership among His disciples will cause many to stumble (See comments 5:29,30; Mk 9:35-45. Cf 3:5; 2 Jn 9:10). **Life:** Reference is to entering, as Mark explains, the kingdom of God (Mk 9:47). **Everlasting fire:** "Everlasting" is from the Greek word *aionios*. Reference is to the certain punishment of the wicked that has consequences that will not be undone (See 5:22; 10:28; 2 Th 1:7-9; Rv 20:14,15). This is the gehenna that will be the final destruction of the wicked after punishment has been rendered to them for their sin. In this context, Jesus explains that severe punishment will be rendered to those who harm the flock of God (See comments 10:28).

18:10 Their angels: Compare Ps 34:7; At 12:5ff; Hb 1:14; Rv 8:2. This is a difficult verse to understand. Some have affirmed that there are guardian angels assigned to children. If such is true, then we would wonder what these angels do since children and Christians fall victim to calamity (At 14:22). Hebrews 1:14 teaches that angels are ministers of God's will on behalf of the righteous, thus angels function in some way to carry out the will of God in the lives of the righteous.

18:11 The manuscript evidence for the inclusion of this verse is weak. Both the Nestle-Aland and United Bible Societies Greek text omit the verse. However, the teaching of the verse is found in Luke 19:10 (See Jn 3:17; 12:47). The statement of the verse is definitive of the mission and ministry of Jesus.

18:12-14 See Lk 15:4-10. Jesus' illustration here teaches the great value of just one person who has gone astray. Jesus gave up heaven in order to seek and save those who are lost (Lk 19:10; Ph 2:5-11). His example should motivate Christians to seek those who are overtaken by the world (18:12-14; Gl 6:1; Js 5:19,20).

BROTHER WHO OFFENDS ANOTHER

18:15 If your brother sins against you: In 5:23,24 Jesus spoke of the innocent party who remembered that someone had a complaint against him. Here Jesus speaks of the one who causes the sin (Lk 17:3; compare Gl 6:1; 2 Th 3:15; Js 5:19,20; Lv 19:17). In this teaching of the Sinai law, the one who is sinned against must take the initiative and go to the offender. Taken together, both Matthew 5 and this context teach that both the offended and the offender have the responsibility to approach one another according to the Sinai law. **Between you and him alone:** The two parties that are involved in the problem must first seek to settle the matter in a private manner (Compare 1 Jn 5:16). The purpose for the action is to open communication and save the soul of the one who sinned against his brother. It would be wrong for a brother to publicly accuse another brother without first going to him in private.

18:16,17 Mouth of two or three witnesses: See Dt 17:6; 19:15; Jn 8:17; 2 Co 13:1; 1 Tm 5:19; Hb 10:28. The witnesses would stand as a testimony to others if the sinning brother does not repent. The presence of the witnesses also manifests to the sinning brother the seriousness of

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the matter. **Tell it to the assembly:** In the context of Jesus' ministry, the word *ekklesia* (church) referred to the people of Israel. Jesus emphasizes here the Sinai law to settle dispute, and thus, He prepares the way for the behavior of His *ekklesia* (See 1 Co 6). In reference to the church, compare the instructions of 1 Timothy 5:20 and Titus 3:10. **If he refuses:** If one refuses to listen to the witnesses, as well as to the general assembly, then such a one has given up his right to fellowship with those who have submitted to one another in love (See Ep 5:21; compare 1 Co 5:11; 2 Co 2:6,7; 2 Th 3:6-15). **Gentile and a tax collector:** Those who were considered ungodly, or as dishonest tax collectors, were shunned by the Jews. Jesus here states that those who are unrepentant should be shunned (See 1 Jn 5:14-16).

18:18,19 Have been bound in heaven: These words make the matter of verses 15-17 serious. What is agreed on by the assembly on earth concerning the unrepentant spirit of the sinner, has already been recognized by God in heaven (See Rm 16:17; 1 Co 5:4,5; Ti 3:10,11). When the assembly withdraws its fellowship from the unrepentant, then the sinner cannot expect to have fellowship with God. These matters must be lovingly carried out with much fasting and prayer, for the souls of men are involved. **If two of you agree:** The united prayers of the saints accomplish much (See At 4:24ff). The disciples of Jesus must make a concerted effort to work in harmony with one another. Unity among the members of the body is a fundamental teaching that must be guarded (Jn 17:20,21; 1 Co 1:10; Ep 4:1-16; Ph 1:27).

18:20 This verse is not teaching that the presence of God is guaranteed by the assembly of two or three Christians. God is everywhere always (At 17:28). The context is emphasizing the agreement of two people on matters that pertain to their harmony with one another. The agreement of the two brothers constitutes unity.

18:21,22 Seven times: See Lk 17:4. The Jewish religious leaders taught that the most one needed to forgive those who sin against others was four times. Peter here thought that if he suggested seven times he would be manifesting a greater spirit of forgiveness. He is thinking about being legally right in reference to Jewish traditional teaching. However, by the time Jesus finishes the parable of the unforgiving debtor in verses 24-35, Peter will understand that mercy and forgiveness must come from the heart as a result of God's mercy and forgiveness of our sins (See Jb 33:29,30; Am 1:3; 2:6). **Seventy times seven:** Peter's proposal was not enough. Forgiveness must be unlimited. As often as the sinner truly repents, then those against whom the sin is committed are bound to forgive. Such is the nature of the forgiveness of God. If a man repents, then there is no sin too great for God to forgive. Such should be the nature of Christians. If we do not forgive those who sin against us, God will not forgive us (6:12; Js 2:13; see vs 35). The spirit of forgiveness guards one against becoming bitter. It guards the joy that must be characteristic of our hearts. An unforgiving attitude will destroy a Christian's spirit. Therefore, one must forgive for his own benefit. If he does not forgive, he will often become bitter.

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PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING

18:23 The following parable of Jesus illustrates the extent to which we must forgive and the reason why we should. **The kingdom of heaven:** Those who are subjects of the kingdom reign of Jesus should be of a forgiving nature (See 6:9,10). **King:** One should always view forgiveness in relation to how much God has forgiven us. The extent to which God has forgiven us should make our forgiveness of others limitless.

18:24,25 Ten thousand talents: This would be about sixty million denarii. One denari was about one day's wage (See Ex 38:24; 1 Kg 10:10; 2 Kg 18:14; 1 Ch 29:4-7; 2 Ch 36:3). So much money is indicated that it would be impossible for a normal man to work every day of his life in order to repay. The spiritual implication of the parable is clear. We owe God more than we can pay in reference to our eternal salvation in heaven. We will receive more in heaven than we can possibly earn through works on earth. Salvation is truly by grace (Rm 7:14). **Him to be sold:** Sinai law stated that if one could not pay his debts, he could be sold in order to pay the debt (2 Kg 4:1).

18:26-28 The debtor needed to be brought to account in order to recognize his debt. Before one will repent of sins, he must first recognize the impossible situation he is in with reference to his inability to work in order to earn his salvation. **Moved with compassion:** We must not miss the spiritual message of what Jesus is here teaching. His disciples have grown up in a legalistic religious system. But God's message is one of grace. God was moved with love to extend grace to all mankind through the cross (Ps 145:8; Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:19). He thus showed great mercy toward us (Ep 2:4-9). Even while we were in sin, and thus, undeserving of God's love, Jesus was sent to die for our sins (Jn 3:16; Rm 5:8) in order that we be forgiven (Hb 8:12; 10:17). **A hundred denarii:** This is only a few cents. It is a trivial amount in comparison to what the unmerciful servant originally owed the king.

18:29-34 The unforgiving servant showed no appreciation for his own forgiveness. In his relationship with his fellow brother, he was hard and cruel (See 19:19; Gl 5:14). Instead of manifesting mercy in his heart because of the mercy that was extended toward him, he only thought of himself in reference to his fellow man. He showed no mercy though he had received great mercy (See comments Js 2:13). The hardness of his heart was manifested in the fact that the mercy that was extended toward him did not motivate mercy in his heart toward others. **His lord was angry:** The unforgiving spirit of the one who was forgiven stirred anger in the heart of the forgiving master. Even those who witnessed the unforgiving spirit of the man were grieved. The unforgiving man was subsequently delivered to torment because of his hardness of heart. He was not judged on the basis of failing to do a legal act of forgiveness, but because his heart was hard. He was not of the character of the master, and thus had no right to be in the presence of the master or other people.

18:35 So likewise will My heavenly Father do: If God's mercy toward us does not stimulate the same in our lives toward others, then we

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also will be delivered to the tormentors. Those with unforgiving spirits cannot inherit the heavenly environment of a forgiving God because they are not of the nature of the Father. God will render judgment without mercy on those who do not show mercy (Js 2:13). Therefore, we must store up mercy for judgment by exercising mercy toward others in reference to their sins against us (See 6:12-14; 7:2; Pv 21:13; Mk 11:26; Lk 6:37; Ep 4:32; Cl 3:13; Js 5:9). One must keep in mind that the ability to forgive is a necessary quality that one must possess in order to be a candidate for heaven. It is the nature of God to forgive. His children must have the same nature.

Struggles of the Christ

(19:1 – 25:46)

Outline: (1) Closing the door on divorce (19:1-12), (2) Jesus and children (19:13-15), (3) The rich young ruler (19:16-30), (4) Laborers in the vineyard (20:1-16), (5) Jesus foretells His death (20:17-19), (6) Asking for positions (20:20-28), (7) Healing two blind men (20:29-34), (8) The triumphal entry (21:1-17), (9) The barren fig tree (21:18-22), (10) Jesus' authority challenged (21:23-27), (11) Parable of the two sons (21:28-32), (12) Parable of the wicked husbandman (21:33-46), (13) Parable of the marriage feast (22:1-14), (14) Jesus tempted about paying taxes (22:15-22), (15) Questions concerning the resurrection (22:23-33), (16) Pharisees ask deceiving questions (22:34-40), (17) Jesus and David (22:41-46), (18) Denunciation of religious leaders (23:1-7), (19) Servanthood discipleship (23:8-10), (20) Greatness through service (23:11,12), (21) Seven woes (23:13-39), (22) End of national Israel (24:1-44), (23) The faithful and wise servant (24:45-47), (24) The evil servant (24:48-51), (25) Parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13), (26) Parable of the talents (25:14-30), (27) Judgment (25:31-46)

Chapter 19

CLOSING THE DOOR ON DIVORCE

(Mk 10:1-12)

19:1,2 After the teaching situation of the preceding chapter, Matthew records that Jesus went south to the region of Judea east of the Jordan. About five months transpire before the teaching incident of the following verses. **Great multitudes:** At this time in Jesus' ministry, the number in the multitudes was greatly increasing.

19:3 Pharisees: Again, these legalistic religious leaders are seeking inconsistencies in what they considered the theology of Jesus. If such inconsistencies could be discovered, they believed they had just cause to discredit Jesus before the multitudes. On this occasion they use the present controversy concerning divorce that exists in the teaching of the religious community of Israel. **Is it lawful:** The Pharisees are approaching the argument from a strict legal position (See comments 5:31,32). There were two schools of thought at this time among Jewish scholars concerning divorce under the Sinai law. The question that is asked by the Phari-

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sees is based on the background of contention between these two schools of thought. (1) There were those of the teaching of the Jewish teacher Hillel who taught that a man could divorce his wife for any reason. They based their reasoning on Deuteronomy 24:1-4. (2) There were also those of the teaching of the Jewish teacher Shammai who taught that fornication was the only cause for divorce. They also based their teaching on what Moses instructed in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Both groups were basing their teachings on the interpretation of the same passage. The Pharisees in this context were testing Jesus as to which interpretation of Deuteronomy 24 He would condone. The Pharisees were asking from the viewpoint of God's people, the Jews, who were in a covenant relationship with God, and thus, Jesus answers in the following statements with the same understanding.

19:4,5 *Have you not read:* It is important to note that Jesus bypasses any arguments over interpretations, and even Moses' instructions in Deuteronomy 24. He went straight to God's original plan as instituted from the very beginning of time (See Gn 1:27; 2:21-24; 5:2; Mt 2:14-16). ***Made them male and female:*** God made the two sexes in the beginning for the purpose of procreation. They were to be fruitful and multiply in order to populate the world. ***Leave his father and mother:*** When marriage occurs, the man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. In reference to earthly relationships, the attention of the husband and wife should first be directed primarily toward one another (See Gn 2:24; 1 Co 6:16; 7:2). ***The two will become one flesh:*** In a spiritual sense, the man and woman in marriage are to be committed to one another. Their minds should not be set on other men or women as prospects for marriage or intimate relationships. Their mental and emotional bond is to be even stronger than their relationship with their parents. It was God's original plan from the beginning that among men and women there should be one man and one woman paired together for one life. When such is done, God hates the divorce of the two for every foolish reason that is invented by man (See Mt 2:14-16).

19:6-8 *Let not man separate:* Man cannot of himself invent reasons for divorce. God has joined the man and wife together and it is only God who can separate them. Divorce was not a part of God's original plan in marriage. God allowed such in Israel only because of man's digression away from His original law concerning marriage. ***Why then did Moses ... give a certificate:*** Jesus' teaching concerning God's original plan for marriage makes the Pharisees now question Him concerning the certificate of divorce that God later gave to Israel through Moses (Dt 24:1-4). ***Because of the hardness of your hearts:*** God allowed Moses to give the certificate of divorce in Deuteronomy 24 as a concession because at the time the certificate was given to the Israelites, they had forgotten the original law of God (Hb 3:15). They were thus divorcing for many man-made reasons. The certificate of divorce was given for the purpose of closing the door on divorce for many reasons in order to restore the marriage situation in Israel to be in closer harmony with the original marriage law. Therefore,

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Moses allowed divorce, not because it was a change in God's original law, but because it was the lesser of two evils. The two evils were divorce for every possible reason of man and divorce for only one reason, that reason being the violation of the marriage contract by the promiscuous actions of one partner.

19:9 *Whoever:* This was to whoever among the Jewish audience He was addressing the application of the law of Moses. ***Except for fornication:*** The Greek word here is "fornication," meaning sexual immorality (See 5:32; Mk 10:11,12; Lk 16:18). Fornication is a generic word in reference to sexual sins. It would include homosexuality, lesbianism and adultery. Homosexuality is illicit sexual activity between two males. Lesbianism is illicit sexual activity between two females. Adultery is the breaking of a marriage contract because of the unfaithfulness of one partner. The marriage contract is broken by the sexual activity of one mate outside the bond of the marriage (See also comments 5:31,32). Fornication on the part of either marriage partner establishes grounds upon which the marriage contract can be dissolved. Jesus' teaching here for the Jews, who were in a covenant relationship with God, is again given on the basis of closing the door on divorce, for the Jews were at this time in Jesus' ministry, divorcing for every possible man-made reason. In 1 Corinthians 7:8-15 Paul gives more revelation from God concerning the situation where one partner is converted into a covenant relationship with God by obedience to the gospel and the other partner is not. Further revelation is also given in 1 Corinthians 7 concerning situations where the Christian is deserted by the unbelieving mate.

19:10-12 *If such is the case:* The disciples were living in the environment where divorce was enacted for many reasons. Jesus' law to restore the family situation of His day to be closer to the original law of God seems to be difficult for them to understand in reference to their social situation. The disciples were thus surprised by the strictness of Jesus' teaching on the matter of divorce. If such were true, then they concluded that it would be better not to marry. It would be better to remain single than to be unable to divorce a wife only for the reason of fornication. ***All men cannot receive this saying:*** Jesus assured them that His teaching of verse 9 was more strict than the commonly accepted teaching of the Jewish religious teachers. Nevertheless, He gives such in order to return the Jews to God's original plan of one man for one wife for one life. ***Eunuchs for the kingdom:*** Men can exercise sexual restraint if their desire is not to marry. Marriage is good, but it is not a law of God that everyone marry. A eunuch is a person who is unable to procreate, and thus, would not marry for such a reason. In this context, Jesus speaks of those who would desire not to marry in order to dedicate their lives to the work of the kingdom. Therefore, remaining single for the sake of the kingdom is sanctioned here by Jesus, though not made a law for religious workers (Compare 1 Co 7:2-17).

JESUS AND CHILDREN
(Mk 10:13-16; Lk 18:15-17)

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19:13-15 Little children were brought to Him: Mark states that when these children were brought to Jesus, He took them into His arms and blessed them (Mk 10:16; Lk 18:17; compare 1 Co 14:20; 1 Pt 2:2). **The disciples rebuked them:** If the bringing of the children occurred during Jesus' discussions on divorce, then possibly the disciples saw the bringing of the children to Jesus as an interruption of their serious conversation with Jesus concerning the subject of divorce. The children were a trivial matter to them in comparison to the subject that was under discussion. **Of such is the kingdom:** Those who would submit to the kingdom reign of Jesus must have the humble and childlike character of little children (Mk 10:15; Lk 18:17). Therefore, the manifestation of the kingdom on earth is seen in the hearts of those who have submitted to Jesus as their Lord and King (See 18:3,4). It must be stated that the erroneous practice of infant baptism is nowhere justified in this text or any other text of the New Testament simply because such is never stated. These children were not being brought to Jesus for baptism. This is simply an incident that happened during the ministry of Jesus. It was not a common practice for parents to bring their children to Jesus in this manner. Those who were baptized were only those who could hear, believe and repent. Baptism in obedience to the gospel, therefore, was for those who were of the age of recognizing their sin against God. These children who are here in the presence of Jesus are not of this age.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER (Mk 10:17-31; Lk 18:18-30)

19:16 One came: Mark records that this rich young person came running to Jesus and knelt down (Mk 10:17). Jesus subsequently looked on this person with great love because of his dedication (Mk 10:21). Though the young ruler was legalistic in his thinking concerning his obedience to God, he was not a wicked person. However, he had possessions and position that hindered his total commitment to Jesus. He was rich and he was a ruler. These two aspects of his life made it difficult for him to follow Jesus. **Teacher:** See Mk 10:17. "Good" was a Jewish reference to God who is the only one who is good in the sense that in Him there is no darkness (1 Jn 1:5). **What good things must I do:** In considering the legalistic system of religious practice in which the youth grew up, he is asking from the viewpoint of what more religious laws or good deeds must he perform in order to earn his acceptance.

19:17 Only One who is good, that is, God: The young ruler simply addressed Jesus as "teacher." But Jesus here teaches that it is God who is standing before Him. Jesus makes the statement here to stimulate thought. If God is the only one who is good in the sense of being without any sin and darkness (1 Jn 1:5), then Jesus as God is such. He did not deny or refute the young ruler's statement. **Keep the commandments:** Obedience to law is evidence of one's appreciation of sonship (See Rm 3:31). It is evidence of one's love of God (See Jn 14:15; 15:14), and thanksgiving for his salvation (2 Co 4:15). However, obedience to law in

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and of itself will not save, for by works of law no man can justify himself before God (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; 3:11,12; see intro. to Gl).

19:18-20 Jesus lists five of the ten commandments (See Ex 20:12-16; Dt 5:16-20; Lv 19:18). Instead of counting off his performance of law, he should have been mourning over his inability to keep law perfectly in order to be saved. **What do I still lack:** He had kept the law from his youth, but still felt that something was lacking. In this statement, the young ruler evidently came to the conclusion that salvation was more than simply keeping statutes and precepts of law (See Ph 3:6,7). If one could be saved by performance of law alone, then certainly law should have brought comfort to the heart of this young ruler. But it did not. He was good, but he knew that he still lacked something (See At 10:1-6; Gl 3:21).

19:21,22 **Go and sell what you have and give to the poor:** Jesus here tested the sincerity of the young ruler's heart. Jesus does not make the statement as a general principle for Christians. He is simply helping the young ruler realize that every sacrifice that is necessary must be paid in order to become a disciple of Jesus (See Lk 12:33; At 2:45; 4:34,35; 12:12; 21:8). In this case, that which caused the young ruler to stumble was his love of riches. In order to become a disciple of Jesus, he had to get rid of that which stood between him and God. **Treasure in heaven:** See 6:20. The problem with a great amount of material possessions is that such distracts one's mind from kingdom thinking (See Cl 3:1,2). Materialism promotes self-indulgence as one thinks of what he can buy or do to entertain himself. **He went away sorrowful:** The young man failed the test of discipleship. He had been overcome with materialism and was not willing to make the necessary sacrifices in order to follow Jesus. One must keep in mind that there is no material sacrifice too great to be paid in order to follow Jesus (See Lk 9:23; Rm 12:1,2).

19:23,24 It is difficult for the rich to be about kingdom business because their minds are continually directed and controlled by that which is of this world (See 13:22; Mk 10:23ff; Lk 18:24,25; 1 Co 1:26; 1 Tm 6:9). Their wealth diverts their attention away from those spiritual things that will exist long after the material has been destroyed (See 2 Pt 3:10,11). **Camel ... eye of a needle:** This may have been an exaggeration of speech in order to show the difficulty by which the rich and influential would humble themselves in order to allow the kingdom reign of Jesus in their hearts (See Lk 17:20,21; Js 2:6,7). However, the figure may have been taken from a gate in the walls of Jerusalem that was so small that it was difficult for a camel to enter. Whatever the source of the metaphor, the principle is still the same. It is difficult for the rich and influential rulers of this world to become obedient subjects of the kingdom reign of God.

19:25,26 **Who then can be saved:** The disciples erroneously thought that wealth placed one in a better standing with God because the wealthy could supposedly earn salvation by their many good deeds. So if it is difficult for the wealthy to be saved according to Jesus' teaching, the disciples wondered who could then be saved. **With God all things are possible:** The great performers of the law, such as the rich young ruler, cannot save

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themselves through perfect obedience to law, for all have sinned (Rm 3:9,10,23). The rich cannot save themselves with many good deeds. All men must be saved on the basis of the grace of God (See Ep 2:8). What men cannot do in reference to saving themselves, God can (See comments Rm 7:24,25).

19:27,28 *We have forsaken all:* Peter reasons that he and the other eleven had long since left all they had in order to follow Jesus (See 4:20; Lk 5:11). He now wonders what preferential treatment they would receive for such sacrifice. ***In the regeneration:*** This is the time of the establishment of the kingdom reign of Jesus that was first officially announced in Acts 2. This time of regeneration would conclude with the final coming of Jesus at the end of time (See 1 Co 15:24-28). ***Sit on the throne:*** See 25:31; Ep 1:20-22. In this time of regeneration that we are presently in, Jesus sits on David's throne and rules over all things (Zc 6:12,13; Lk 1:31,32; At 2:22-35). ***Twelve thrones:*** See Lk 22:28-30. The meaning here is that the apostles would be judges on their thrones in the time of regeneration. They would be such by delivering to man the will of God (Jn 14:26; 16:13,18,19). Men would subsequently judge themselves by their reactions to the truth of God that was delivered through the apostles. The apostles' thrones of judgment continue with us today in the sense that the truth they revealed continues to be preached throughout the world (See 1 Co 14:37; 2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:3; 3:15,16; Jd 6).

19:29,30 Mark says that those who leave these family relationships and possessions in order to follow Jesus, will receive a hundredfold in this life (Mk 10:30). He also adds that in the age to come in reference to the time of Jesus' ministry with the disciples in the Jewish age, they will receive eternal life. In this age about which Jesus was speaking, Christians do have eternal life (1 Jn 5:13). In reference to relationships and possessions, the sacrificial Christian has houses and spiritual family relationships with Christians throughout the world. He has such as a result of the loving hospitality that one has in Christ with his fellow brother in Christ. ***Last:*** Those who place themselves first in this present world because of wealth, position or power, will be last in the age of regeneration that was to come (20:16; Lk 13:30). Being last meant that they would not be a part of the family of God since they would refuse to obey the gospel.

Chapter 20

LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

One lesson learned from the following parable is that the accumulation of good works is not significant in reference to one's standing in the kingdom. When it comes to acceptability in reference to God, spirituality is not determined as we would determine such according to the standards of the world. The accumulation of good deeds and positions of authority may be valuable in the world, but in reference to one's righteousness before God, such things do not earn one's salvation before God (See comments Rm 3:27; 4:4,5; 11:6; Ep 2:9; compare comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16).

20:1-7 *Kingdom of heaven:* Subjects who have responded to the

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kingdom reign of Jesus are explained in this parable. God is pictured as hiring laborers to work on behalf of the kingdom. **Laborers:** God calls people to work on His behalf (See 9:37,38). **A denarius a day:** The denarius was about a day's wage. **Third hour:** 9:00am Jewish time. Application is to those who have been servants for a great deal of time before the conclusion of their ministry. **Sixth and the ninth hour:** 12:00 noon and 3:00pm. People become subjects of the kingdom at different times and ages in their lives. Therefore, those who have worked longer have accomplished more work. **Eleventh hour:** 5:00pm. These are those people who became obedient subjects of the kingdom, but did so soon before their labor was terminated by death.

20:8-12 They received ... a denarius: The result for faithful service in the kingdom of God is the same for all. Those who have worked longer in the kingdom may appreciate the rest of heaven more, but they will still receive the same as those who have become subjects for only a short time. **They grumbled:** The complaint was based on their reasoning that more work should have deserved more pay. The ones who were hired first thought that it was unfair that they should receive the same pay as those who were hired last. In reference to kingdom matters, this reasoning is erroneous and arrogant. There is no possible means by which one can do kingdom work on earth in order to put God in debt to give us eternal heaven. Paul even says that one cannot suffer enough throughout a lifetime in order to put God in debt to give heaven as a fair payment for suffering (Rm 8:18). What the Christian will receive is beyond his ability to earn. Therefore, there is no room among Christians for competition in relation to the glory they will receive for their labors on earth. This would also apply in answer to Peter's question in 19:27. One cannot live long enough in order to earn the glory that will be revealed to us. How can one possibly reason that he can work twenty or fifty years on earth in service to God, and then, exchange such service in a fair deal for the eternity of heavenly glory? Heaven, therefore, is not a payment for service, but an offer of grace to those who have committed their lives to God.

20:13-15 All who agree to submit to the Lord, and thus, take on the responsibility of kingdom service, must also agree that they will all receive the same eternal glory, which glory will be far greater than what any laborer would deserve to be paid. If it is lawful for a landowner of this world to so deal with laborers as Jesus explained in this parable, then certainly it is lawful for God to deal as He wishes with that which pertains to heavenly matters (Compare Rm 9:20,21).

20:16 See 19:30; 22:14. Those who think they are religiously right will be last, but those who humbly seek God as a servant will be considered first.

JESUS FORETELLS HIS DEATH

(Mk 10:32-34; Lk 18:31-34)

20:17-19 Mark records that the disciples were both amazed and afraid concerning Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem. Their fears were justified

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because this was Jesus' last trip to the city of people who would nail Him to the cross. **Betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes:** It would be the religious leaders of Israel who would crucify Jesus by the proxy of the Roman government. Jesus did not fit into their system of religion, and thus, their envious feelings led to their execution of the wicked deed of crucifying Jesus. **Death:** See the prophecy of Isaiah 53. **Deliver Him:** Jesus knew all of the events that would transpire concerning His death (See 16:21; 17:22,23). He would be delivered first to the Jewish Sanhedrin (26:15), and then to the Romans in order to be crucified (27:2; At 2:23; 3:13-15; 4:27; 21:11). **Mock ... scourge ... crucify:** Jesus would suffer all the humiliation of a common criminal. A scourge was a whip made of broken bones or sharp stones that were tied at the end of a binding of numerous strips of leather. This whip was used to beat individuals who were to be punished for some crime. Though innocent of any crime, Jesus would be scourged. **He will rise again:** Talk concerning His death saddened the disciples (16:21-28; Lk 9:22; 18:31; 24:46). However, what would first demoralize the disciples would turn into the most glorious event of history. The accepted King would die in order to be victorious over sin. He would rise again to be victorious over death. At this time in the ministry of Jesus, the foundation for the gospel event is in the process of being laid (See comments 1 Co 15:1-5).

ASKING FOR POSITIONS

(Mk 10:35-45)

Since Jesus had just discussed His death and departure, there arose again the subject of positions among the disciples. James and John took advantage of the occasion in order to privately ask Jesus for special positions in what they believe will be a physical kingdom reign of Jesus (See At 1:6).

20:20,21 See comments Mk 10:35-45. James and John (Mk 10:35) apparently ask their mother, Salome (Mk 15:40; 16:1), the wife of Zebedee (4:21; 10:2), to approach Jesus about special positions of power in His kingdom. Mark credits James and John for making the request. **May sit:** They were asking for positions of power and influence, not work and slavehood.

20:22 **You do not know what you ask:** They knew what they were asking in reference to a physical kingdom. They did not in reference to the kingdom reign Jesus was about to establish (See Lk 17:20,21; Jn 18:36). **Are you able to drink of the cup:** Jesus wanted to know if they were able to accept the portion of responsibility that comes with the position of leadership (See Ps 11:6; 75:8; Is 51:17; Jr 25:15). **And be baptized with the baptism:** The Greek word *baptizo* is here used in reference to the definition "to overwhelm" or "to bury." In leadership in the kingdom they would be overwhelmed with or buried in the burden of leadership that would include great sorrow and suffering. **We are able:** We cannot but admire the bravery of these two disciples. Their erroneous concept of a physical kingdom would demand that the Romans be driven from the land of Palestine. Here they accept what they believe would be a great struggle

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to do such. Though their understanding of the kingdom was wrong, their determination to pay the price must be admired.

20:23 *You will indeed drink My cup and be baptized:* It would indeed be necessary for the disciples to have the same amount of dedication and courage that was necessary for a leader to lead an army into battle in order to lead in the spiritual kingdom of Jesus. They would suffer (Jn 15:18,19; 21:18,19). James would even be the first apostle to be killed for the faith (At 12:1,2), though John his younger brother would be the last to die (Rv 1:9).

20:24 *Greatly indignant:* The other disciples' indignation was not the result of their feeling that James and John were wrong to ask for the special privileges. They thought that each one of them should also be considered for the positions of sitting at the right and left hand of Jesus in the supposed physical kingdom (Mk 9:34; 10:31; Lk 22:24).

20:25-28 In rebuking both the ambitions of James and John, and the jealous indignation of the others, Jesus teaches again that greatness in the kingdom He will establish will be through servanthood (See 18:1-4; 23:11; Mk 9:35; 10:43-45). ***The Gentiles lord it over them:*** Whatever concept and behavior one has of the lordship leadership among the Gentiles in the secular world, it would not be the manner by which the disciples would lead the body. ***But it will not be so among you:*** Leaders among God's people will not lead through lordship leadership. Lordship leaders seek to work among the disciples in the same manner as they function in the world outside the church (See 1 Pt 5:3). God's people are not to be dealt with as men deal with the business world. ***Let him be your servant:*** Leaders among the disciples are slaves to the needs of the flock of God. ***Just as:*** Jesus came to be a servant to the spiritual needs of humanity. As He made tremendous sacrifices to pay our debt, so we should work to serve the needs of others (26:28; see comments Jn 13:1-17). ***Ransom:*** Jesus ransomed His rights for the sake of His disciples (Is 53:10,11; Dn 9:24-26; Jn 11:51,52; Rm 5:15,19; 1 Tm 2:5,6; Ti 2:14; 1 Pt 1:19). Leaders among the disciples should do likewise. Slaves sacrifice the right of choice in order to accommodate the needs of the body of members. Their desire is not to please themselves, but to please those they serve. Such is the heart of a true slave.

HEALING TWO BLIND MEN

(Mk 10:46-52; Lk 18:35-43)

20:29-31 Of the two men, Bartimaeus was the more outspoken. He was thus mentioned in the record of Mark (Mk 10:46). ***Son of David:*** They proclaimed their belief in Jesus as the Messiah of the Jews. They, as well as all Israel, knew that the Messiah would be born of the seed of David (Lk 1:31,32). He would come to deliver them from their oppression. ***Multitude rebuked them:*** It was the disciples who earlier rebuked some for bringing the children to Jesus (19:13). They may have been doing the same here with the multitude who are more interested in other things than compassion on two blind men.

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20:32-34 Jesus had compassion: Though Jesus did not heal every one of His day, He did heal those whose faith moved them to plead for His healing. Mark records that the faith of these two men resulted in their healing (Mk 10:52). Faith was not a condition for their healing. It was their faith that moved them to cry out to Jesus for help. **Immediately their eyes received sight:** Here again the explanation of a miracle is revealed. The healing took place instantaneously. There were no ceremonies performed or potions made. The healing was visible to all and no one could deny it. The purpose of miracles to confirm the messengers of God is again accomplished (Jn 3:2; 20:30,31; Mk 16:20).

Chapter 21

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

(Mk 11:1-11; Lk 19:29-44; Jn 12:12-19)

21:1-7 These are now the last days of the ministry of Jesus. Jesus had just spent the night in the house of Lazarus whom He raised from the dead. Lazarus also lived in Bethany that was about a kilometer east of Jerusalem (Jn 12:9). It is about five days before the Passover feast (Ex 12:3; see prophecy of Ne 8:15; Zc 14:4). **A donkey:** Jesus did not come as a king riding on a great horse before the people. He came riding upon the common animal that was used to bear the burdens of the people (See Gn 49:11; 2 Kg 9:13; Is 63:1-3). He came to bear the burden of men's sins. The events that take place here are the fulfillment of Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9. **Their garments:** After the donkey was brought, the disciples laid their garments over the donkey to make a saddle upon which Jesus could comfortably sit (Lk 19:35; compare 2 Kg 9:13).

21:8,9 Garments ... branches ... on the road: They gave Jesus the royal procession of a king (Compare Ps 118:25,26; Lv 23:40). Unfortunately at this time, the multitudes, including the disciples, still considered Him to be an earthly king (See Jn 12:19; At 1:6). If it were Jesus' intention to establish an earthly kingdom reign at this time, then certainly the opportunity had now presented itself to do so. But such was not His intention (See Jn 18:36-38). He came to Jerusalem to die, not to reign on earth. However, in dying, He would eventually ascend to the right hand of God and reign over all things (See comments Dn 2 & 7). **Hosanna to the Son of David:** See Ps 118:25,26. Hosanna means "save us now." Therefore, the cry of the people was that Jesus be their deliverer from the oppression of the Roman government (See 2 Sm 14:4). Those in the multitude here were accepting Jesus as the Messiah who would deliver them by establishing an earthly kingdom (Mk 11:10). Unfortunately, the multitudes were driven by the common Jewish belief that the Messiah would deliver them by reinstating the independence of the Jewish nation.

21:10,11 Who is this: At this time there were multitudes of foreign people who were in Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover/Pentecost feast. They had traveled from many regions of the Roman Empire in order to keep this annual feast (See At 2:9-11). Many of these did not know who Jesus was. We must keep in mind that descendants of Jews who were

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taken into captivity during the Assyrian (722/21 B.C.) and Babylonian (586 B.C.) captivities visited Jerusalem periodically during the annual Passover/Pentecost feast. They had come to Jerusalem on this Passover/Pentecost in A.D. 30 and encountered Jesus and His teaching. It was a Passover/Pentecost that they would never forget. **This is Jesus:** The local people informed the visitors to Jerusalem who Jesus was. **The prophet:** See Jn 1:21,25; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17; At 3:22ff; 7:37. Jesus was certainly a prophet, but He was more than a prophet. He was the Messiah, and being such included the fulfillment of all that prophecy revealed the Messiah would be. But He was not only the Messiah, He was the Son of God who had come into the world.

21:12,13 Cast out: This was Jesus' second cleansing of the temple (See Jn 2:13-16). **Money changers:** The Levitical shekel or half-shekel was the authorized money to be used for the temple tax (See Ex 30:13-16). However, the money changers possessed most of the shekels. Foreigners had to exchange money they brought for the shekels used in the temple service. The money changers were thus giving the people an unfair exchange rate for their money (See Ex 30:13). **Those who sold doves:** Sacrifices were also to be made during the Passover/Pentecost feasts (Lv 1:14; 5:7; 12:8; 14:22; Lk 2:24). Instead of the foreigners bringing their sacrifices with them, they simply waited until they arrived in Jerusalem to buy an animal for sacrifice. Those who sold the sacrifices were selling them at great profit (See Mk 11:15,16). **Den of thieves:** The money changers and merchants were thieves in the sense that they were being unfair in their business operations. They were unfair with those who were obligated to deal with them in order to carry out the required sacrifices at the temple for the Passover/Pentecost feast. See Is 56:7; Jr 7:11.

21:14,15 He healed them: These were the final confirming miracles that Jesus worked. In doing such in the temple area, He brought great attention to who He was. **They became indignant:** Many of the religious leaders cared nothing for those who were healed. They were extremely jealous because Jesus had attracted the attention of the people. He had thus undercut their accepted leadership position among the people.

21:16,17 Out of the mouth of babes: Compare Ps 8:2; Lk 19:40. The chief priests and scribes were indignant because Jesus allowed the people to exalt Him to the status of king. It was at this time that Jesus began to increase the antagonism of the Jewish religious leaders in order to take Himself to the cross. Over three years of ministry had now brought Him to these final days of His work. These were the days in which the religious leaders would take Him to the cross. **Bethany:** He probably went to stay with Lazarus, Martha and Mary (Jn 11:1,18; 12:1).

THE BARREN FIG TREE

(Mk 11:12-14,20-26; Lk 19:45-48)

21:18,19 A fig tree: This variety of fig tree puts forth its leaves, and then its fruit. However, the leaves were present but there was no fruit. Jesus does not curse the tree simply because there was no fruit. He makes

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a visual illustration of the religious state of Israel. The Jews had produced an outward show of righteousness that they had created after their traditions (15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9). However, the religious leaders did not produce fruit by accepting Him as the Messiah. Herein is a prophecy of the future of the nation. National Israel would no longer produce fruit. She had rejected the Son of God, and thus, God rejected her. The Jews' rejection thus pronounced the doom of the nation. Jerusalem and national Israel would come to an end in A.D. 70 (See comments ch 24).

21:20-22 Mark indicates that on the following day the disciples noticed that the fig tree had withered (Mk 11:20). ***If you have faith:*** Their faith would not be the source of their power. It would be their trust in God who is the source (17:20; see Js 1:6; 5:16). Jesus knew that over the next few days the disciples would need to have their faith increased as they went through the great turmoil of what was about to happen. ***All things you ask in prayer:*** See 7:7-11; Mk 11:24; Lk 11:9; Js 5:16. ***Believing:*** When one prays in faith, it is the rule that God answers prayer. Though He may not answer in the manner we deem correct, or at the time we feel we need an answer, He still answers our prayers. Christians, therefore, must always pray with a positive attitude that God is working in answer to their sincere prayers of faith. Prayer changes things.

JESUS' AUTHORITY CHALLENGED

(Mk 11:27 – 12:12; Lk 20:1-19)

21:23 ***By what authority:*** See 7:28,29. The chief priests had received their authority because they were born into the priesthood. But Jesus had not been born into the Levitical priesthood, though He cleansed the temple of those the priests knew were unfair merchants and money changers (vs 25). The One who created the very stones from which the temple was constructed was in their midst (Cl 1:16). It was because of who He was that gave Him the authority to do what He did. It is this One upon whom all belief must be based (Jn 12:48; 1 Pt 4:11).

21:24-27 Knowing the chief priests and elders' desire to ensnare Him, Jesus conditioned His answer to their question on their answer to His questions concerning John, whom they had rejected as a prophet. John had confessed that Jesus was the Son of God (Jn 1:34). By doing such, he confessed that Jesus was greater than he was (3:11-15). The chief priests and elders knew that John had made this confession. They also knew that many of the people had accepted Jesus at least as a great prophet. Therefore, if they said that they believed John, then they would have to confess that Jesus was greater than the prophet John. ***We do not know:*** They realized the dilemma in which Jesus had put them. They thus could give no answer before the people, before whom this confrontation took place. They were embarrassed by the confrontation, and thus, Jesus begins His direct agitation of the religious leaders in order to stir their envious hearts to generate a plan to eliminate Him. He was taking Himself to the cross. We must never assume that Jesus' death was an accident. Everything that happened concerning His crucifixion was under

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His control, for He laid down His own life (See Jn 10:17,18).

PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

21:28-32 Jesus is not finished with the chief priests and elders from the preceding confrontation. He begins here with a series of parables that deal with the unrighteous hearts of those who oppose Him, and thus have rejected Him as the Son of God. **A certain man had two sons:** In this first parable, the first son (the publicans, harlots, poor, etc. of Jesus' generation) later repented and obeyed after first saying that he would not go into the field. The second son (the scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests) would not repent of their hypocritical religiosity. **Enter the kingdom:** The humble in heart submitted to the kingdom of Jesus before the religious leaders. It was only after the kingdom reign was announced in Acts 2 that some of the religious leaders finally recognized who Jesus was, and then submitted to Him as king (See At 6:7). **John came to you:** John lived after the strictness of the Old Testament law, and yet, these self-righteous religious leaders did not accept him. They were more concerned with maintaining their religious institutions after their traditions than listening to John (See comments 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9).

PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMAN

(Mk 12:1-12; Lk 20:9-19)

21:33-40 A certain landowner: God owned the vineyard of national Israel. **Vineyard:** God took Israel from Egyptian captivity and established a covenant with her at Mount Sinai. Thus, the vineyard (nation) was planted. **Wall ... winepress ... tower:** God took care of Israel throughout 1,400 years of their national struggle unto the time of Jesus' coming. Jesus (the Son) had now come to reap the fruit of the vineyard. The fruit were those who were children of Abraham by faith, and thus, those would accept Him as the Messiah. **Vinedressers:** Until the time Jesus came, God assigned the spiritual guidance of the nation of Israel to the religious leaders. **Took his bondservants:** The misguided religious leaders who had followed after false religion, persecuted the true prophets of God (1 Kg 19:20; Jr 37:15; Hb 11:36,37; see Mt 5:12; 23:34-37; At 7:52). **He sent to them his son:** God's messenger of law to Israel was His Son who was the heir of the vineyard (28:18; Jn 13:3; 17:2; Hb 1:2). However, they rejected Him (Jn 1:11; 3:16) and crucified Him outside the city (See 1 Co 2:8; Hb 13:12,13). **What will he do to those vinedressers:** Jesus here asked the chief priests and elders to pronounce their own judgment.

21:41 Wretched end: And such happened to the rebellious religious leaders who died in Rome's destruction of national Israel in A.D. 70 (Lk 21:24). **And lease out his vineyard to other vinedressers:** Responsibility for God's people was taken from the religious leaders whom Jesus had addressed and given to others who recognized that the kingdom was of God and not man (See Lk 20:16; At 8:11ff; 13:46).

21:42,43 See Psalm 118:22,23 from which this quotation is taken. **The stone that the builders rejected:** Jesus was the very foundation upon

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which all God's plan of redemption was built. Nevertheless, Jesus was rejected by the religious leadership of Israel (Jn 1:11; At 4:10,11; 1 Pt 2:4-10; see Rm 9:33). **The kingdom of God will be taken from you:** The religious leaders would no longer be acceptable subjects of the kingdom reign of God that had existed from the beginning. It would be given to others simply because others who had a humble heart (see vs 32) would submit to the King who was in their presence. The assembly of God's people that was about to be established would thus manifest on earth the kingdom reign of Jesus from heaven (See comments 16:18,19; Lk 17:20,21). These rebellious religious leaders of Israel would no longer be the representation on earth of God's kingdom reign from heaven (8:12).

21:44 Will be broken: The religious leaders of national Israel stumbled over Jesus who was the stone (See Is 8:14,15; 28:16; Dn 2:44ff; Zc 12:3; Lk 20:18; Rm 9:33; 1 Pt 2:8). In falling, they sealed the destruction of national Israel that would take place in A.D. 70. **On whomever it falls:** Jesus was the stone of Daniel 2 that broke in pieces and consumed all the power that was exerted by world kingdoms (See Dn 2:24,25,44,45). He did such by being placed by the Father as King of kings and Lord of lords over all things that exist (28:18; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Tm 6:15; 1 Pt 3:22).

21:45,46 Heard His parables: This parable speaks directly to the Jewish religious leadership. The word "parables" is plural, and thus, even the chief priests and Pharisees understood that the other parables also spoke of them and the religious problem that prevailed in Israel because of their ungodly leadership. They understood that Jesus was speaking of them, though the impact of the parables did not have a positive effect on their lives. They continued to reject the teaching of Jesus because their hearts were hardened against Him. **They sought to lay hands on Him:** They could not take Jesus by force because of the people (21:11). The humble of Israel, who were rejected by the religious leaders, accepted the One the religious leaders rejected. At this time in history, it was the humble hearted of Israel who protected Jesus from their own religious leaders. Therefore, not all of Israel accepted the hypocritical religious leadership of the priests, scribes and Pharisees. An Israel by faith existed at the time of Jesus' coming.

Chapter 22

PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST

22:1-5 Bondservants ... invited to the wedding: The kingdom reign of Deity from heaven—after the ascension it was the kingdom reign of Jesus—is manifested from heaven, and thus offers an invitation to all to submit to the King (Compare 11:11,28,29; Rv 3:21). See a similar thought in the parable of Luke 14:16-24. **Bondservants:** The Greek word (doulos) here is "bondservant" or "slave." These were slaves who were born into slavery. In the parable, these represented the submissive messengers of God who were sent forth to Israel in order to call the submissive into servitude to the kingdom reign of God that was at hand (See Mk 1:1-4). **Other bondservants:** This seems to be a reference to the messengers

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of God of Jesus' generation who also went forth to offer the invitation to the Jews to come to the kingdom reign of Jesus that was soon to be established (See comments Is 2:2,3). After the kingdom was established and announced, the submissive responded, thus establishing the *ekklesia* (church) of Christ (16:18,19). The church then carried on throughout the world with the same plea to all men to submit to the King of kings (28:19,20; Mk 16:15; Rm 10:14,15; 1 Th 2:14). **Made light of it:** The Jews rejected the message of the kingdom reign of Jesus (Jn 1:11). Those religious leaders who should have responded had already seized upon the kingdom, and thus, stolen the vineyard from God (See 21:38,39).

22:6,7 Destroyed those murderers and burned their city: Jesus goes beyond His present ministry to the time of the ministry of the apostles and prophets prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The religious leaders continued to reject and persecute the messengers of the kingdom (See At 7:59; 8:1-4). When the rejection was complete, God providentially moved the Roman army under the command of Titus to destroy and burn the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (See comments ch 24).

22:8-11 Not worthy: The rebellious Jews judged themselves unworthy by their rejection of the King of kings. Therefore, it was needful that the message of the kingdom reign be preached to them in order that they have their chance to obey (See At 13:46-48; 18:6). **They found both bad and good:** The message of the king had to go to all (28:19,20; Mk 16:15). Of those to whom it was preached, all sorts responded for various reasons (See 13:3-9, 36-43, 47,48). **Did not have on a wedding garment:** Some of those who first responded to the kingdom reign came in to spy out the liberty that the disciples received in Christ (See comments At 15:1,2; Gl 2:4). They were not clothed with the righteousness that is from God, but their own righteousness.

22:12-14 Cast him into outer darkness: See comments 8:12; Gl 4:30. Jesus is emphasizing again His message of 21:43. The rebellious of His generation would be cast out because they would not choose to accept Him as their king. **Weeping and gnashing of teeth:** This metaphor emphasizes the terror and remorse over the loss of something that one eventually comes to realize he needed or wanted (See 8:12; 25:30). **Few are chosen:** See 20:16. Many have the opportunity to hear the announcement of the kingdom of the King, but few there are who obey, and thus, spiritually prepare themselves for the banquet. Though this parable referred specifically to Jesus' generation in reference to the establishment of His kingdom reign, the lesson certainly illustrates the final coming of Jesus when the obedient move into the heavenly kingdom. All must accept the present message of the gospel in order to prepare for the King who is coming again for judgment (See 25:31-33,46; 2 Co 6:10; Ep 4:24; Cl 3:10-12; 1 Pt 4:17; Rv 3:4; 16:15; 17:14; 19:8).

JESUS TEMPTED ABOUT PAYING TAXES

(Mk 12:13-17; Lk 20:20-26)

22:15 By this time, the raising of Lazarus from the dead had already

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occurred (Jn 11:43,48-53). **The Pharisees ... took council how they might trap Him:** Because the preceding parables had enraged the religious leaders (See 21:45), they now sought to openly cause Jesus to be humiliated in His teaching before the people. In order to uphold their own credibility, they believe they must cause Jesus to fall.

22:16 In order to set the trap for Jesus, the Pharisees here with deceit and hypocrisy, flatter Jesus. **Herodians:** See Mk 3:6; 12:13. These were those who promoted the reign of the Herods as they were appointed and sanctioned by the government of Rome. They also agreed with the Roman occupation of the Jewish nation. They taught that taxes must be paid to Rome. **You are not partial:** Because they were often the victim of Jesus' straight talk, they realized that Jesus spoke the truth concerning hypocritical religious leadership regardless of who it might offend. The Herodians were not necessarily religious people, for they opposed the Pharisees. But on this occasion, the Pharisees were willing to include their own opponents in order to destroy the influence of Jesus (See Mk 8:15).

22:17 Pay taxes to Caesar: See 17:25. They were asking on the basis of the law of Moses. They were asking if the law of Moses, the Sinai law, taught that one should pay taxes to a foreign state. They supposed that if Jesus said not to pay the taxes, He would be in violation of Roman law because Israel at the time was under the rule of Rome. But if Jesus said to pay the taxes, then they supposed that He would be in violation of Sinai law (Compare Dt 17:14,15). We must keep in mind that the statute of Deuteronomy was given to Israel as an independent nation.

22:18-22 Jesus perceived their wickedness: Matthew defined their motives as wicked. Religious leaders who work to scheme against other religious leaders are wicked in their hypocritical hearts (See Jn 2:24,25). The very act of making a scheme to trap another identifies their hearts to be evil. **Likeness:** The image on the denarius was Tiberius. The second commandment of the ten commandments forbade the Jews from making any graven image in order to symbolize worship of gods in an idolatrous manner (Ex 20:4). The image on the coin they presented to Jesus was Caesar's. Since the Jews were not to pay homage to images as that on the Roman coin, then they entrapped themselves concerning paying taxes to a foreign government. **Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's:** In other words, pay the taxes regardless of whose image is on the coin. The money belongs to Caesar, therefore pay to him that which belongs to him (Mk 12:17; Lk 20:25; see Rm 13:7). **To God the things that are God's:** Paying taxes does not mean that one worships Caesar. All things belong to God. One's life is given to God who created all men in His image (Gn 1:26,27). Give one's life to God and the taxes to Caesar. **Went their way:** The Pharisees were now answered. They left Jesus, and then the Sadducees came in order to trap Him with their questions.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION
(Mk 12:18-27; Lk 20:27-40)

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22:23-28 Sadducees: These aristocratic Jews were in opposition to the Pharisees. Theologically, they did not believe in spirits, the soul, or the resurrection from the dead and the afterlife (At 23:7,8). Neither did they believe in afterlife rewards and retributions, angels and demons. It was their belief that when one died, he ceased to exist. **Moses said:** See Dt 25:5-10. The Sinai law said that if the older brother, who had a legal right to continue the family name and the birthright, died leaving his wife without children, his brother must raise up children by the dead brother's wife. The law, which is referred to as the levirate law, was based on the principle that the family name of the dead brother be carried on throughout history (See Gn 38:8). This was the law that was illustrated by Boaz taking Ruth as his wife (Rt 4:5,6).

22:29,30 You are in error: They did not know the Old Testament Scriptures that taught the resurrection (See Dn 12:2; Jb 19:25-27; Is 26:19; compare Jn 20:9). Neither did they understand relationships that would exist in the new heavens and earth of the kingdom reign of the Messiah.

Are like the angels in heaven: On earth marriage is necessary for the purpose of procreation. However, in the new heavens and earth there will be no need for procreation, and thus, no need for marriage. Death will not exist in heaven (Lk 20:35,36; 1 Co 15:26; Rv 20:13,14). Earthly relationships will be superseded by a state wherein we will be like angels who now exist (See Lk 20:36; 1 Jn 3:2). The Scriptures speak little of the nature of this eternal state of being.

22:31,32 God ... of the living: Jesus used the Greek present progressive tense here, thus emphasizing the fact that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were still living at the time God made this statement and at the time Jesus referred to it (See Gn 17:2; 26:24; 28:21; Ex 3:6,15). When one dies, therefore, God does not cease to be his God. The fact that God does not cease being our God after our death emphasizes the fact that we do not cease to exist after death. Therefore, contrary to the beliefs of the Sadducees (vs 23), the spirits of all men are kept by God until the resurrection and embodiment for eternal dwelling in the new heavens and earth (Jn 5:28,29; 1 Th 4:13-17).

22:33 Astonished at His teaching: See 7:28. The scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees had evidently intimidated the multitudes by giving the pretense that they knew the Scriptures, and thus, their beliefs were not to be questioned. But here a carpenter's son from Galilee has rebutted their attempts to trap Him in reference to the Scriptures they should have known. The multitudes were thus astonished at the teaching of Jesus who could answer the presumptuous legal theology of the scribes, Pharisees and the materialistic Sadducees.

DECEIVING QUESTIONS

(Mk 12:28-34)

22:34-38 Put the Sadducees to silence: Jesus had truly refuted the false reasoning of the Sadducees concerning their understanding of the Scriptures. Now the Pharisees are back and they are trying again to trap

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Jesus with the inconsistencies of their own legal theology. **A lawyer:** See Lk 7:30; 10:25. This was a scribe. Scribes were lawyers of the Sinai law, the Prophets, and Jewish religious traditions (Mk 12:28-34). In this case, the Pharisees evidently sought out a sincere scribe and urged him to ask Jesus this question. Jesus said that this scribe was not far from the kingdom (See Mk 12:34). **You will love the Lord your God:** The principle by which one must live life is summed up in the statement Jesus here makes. With such love one establishes a correct relationship with God by obedience to His will (See Dt 6:4-6; Ec 12:13). If one loves God, obedience to His word will be the natural part of his life (Jn 14:15; 1 Jn 5:1-3). **All your heart:** Our affections and feelings must be directed toward what God would have us be in our lives. **All your soul:** The character of the disciple must focus on God. **All your mind:** All the intellectual capabilities of the disciple must also be focused on knowing God and His will. Mark adds that Jesus also said, "All your strength." All the physical and mental abilities of man must also be directed toward serving God. This is the first and great commandment because once one establishes God as the one who should reign in his heart, then everything else will follow (See 6:33).

22:39,40 Love your neighbor as yourself: Establishment of this principle in one's life determines our relationship with our fellow man. Love of our neighbor is the foundation upon which our behavior toward our fellow man is directed (19:19; Lv 19:18; see comments Gl 5:14,22,23). **On these two commandments:** Love is the motivation by which law is put into action in our lives (See comments Rm 3:31). In our relationship with God, we keep His commandments because we love Him (1 Jn 4:15). In relation to our behavior toward our neighbor, we deal justly because we love our fellow man as ourselves.

JESUS & DAVID

(Mk 12:35-37; Lk 20:41-44)

22:41 Jesus asked them: Jesus now takes the initiative. The Pharisees had earlier been silenced, and thus, they dealt with Him indirectly through the scribe of the previous discourse. However, Jesus is not finished with them because He knows that He must stir them to anger in order that they initiate the plot to kill Him.

22:42-44 Whose Son is He: The Pharisees knew that the Old Testament Scriptures taught that the Messiah would be a descendant of David (Ps 132:11; see Mt 1:1; 21:9). Jesus thus sets them up in order to place them in a dilemma as to what they should think of Him. **David ... call Him Lord:** See Ps 110:1. The dilemma is how David, speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, could call one of his descendants Lord, when according to Jewish practice, the descendant king should refer to his father or ancestor king as lord. Jesus' question is how David could refer to one of his descendants as Lord. What Jesus effectively argued is that Psalm 110:1 is a prophecy by David of the Christ. David did not make the statement concerning himself (See At 2:34; Hb 1:13). As the descendant of David, Jesus is the Lord who has ascended to the right hand of God in order to

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reign over all things (Ep 1:20-22; Hb 10:13; 1 Pt 3:22).

22:45,46 In order to answer this question, the Pharisees would have to confess that the Messiah would be human in that He would be a descendant of David. However, He would have to be divine since David acknowledged Him as Lord. If Jesus were the Messiah, then He was also divine. **Any more questions:** See Mk 12:34; Lk 14:6; 20:40. As far as the Pharisees and Sadducees were concerned, the time for their public humiliation in reference to debating Jesus was over. Their next approach to eliminate Jesus' influence was to resort to violence. Such is the action of those, who with power and influence, cannot with reason win the day because of their envy.

Chapter 23

DENUNCIATION OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS

(Mk 12:38-40; Lk 20:45-47)

Jesus now turns to a direct and public attack against the legalistic and hypocritical leadership of the religious leaders of Israel. We must keep in mind that the underlying purpose for this sharp denunciation that He makes of these leaders on this occasion is for the purpose of stirring them up to take Himself to the cross. He also wanted the multitudes to understand the conflict between His teaching of grace and truth as opposed to the hypocritical theology of legalism.

By the time the Son of God was incarnate, the religious leadership of the nation of Israel was in the hands of religious leaders who had stolen the vineyard of God (See 21:33-45). In the text of Matthew 23, therefore, Jesus addressed these leaders who were "the scribes and the Pharisees" (vs 2). In the context of similar pronouncements of judgment in Luke 11, Jesus used the term "lawyers" in reference to the scribes. Matthew 23:11 indicates that Jesus was directly addressing the multitudes and His disciples about the problem of the scribes (lawyers) and Pharisees. We would assume, therefore, that in the multitudes there were scribes and Pharisees who represented the religious institutionalism that they upheld by their legal system of religiosity. In this denunciation, Jesus delivered a stern rebuke to the religious leadership of Israel concerning their misguided legal religiosity and moral standard of leadership of the people.

We must keep in mind that the historical context of this chapter was a short time before the crucifixion. Jesus was at this time in His ministry stirring up the animosity of the religious leaders in order to take Himself to the cross. We do not believe for one moment that Jesus was accidentally nailed on the cross by the hands of an uncontrollable mob. He had the power to lay down His life and to take it up again (Jn 10:17,18). By agitating the ungodly hearts of the jealous religious leaders of Israel, Jesus took Himself to the cross. The context of Matthew 23, therefore, is Jesus' judgment against the religious leaders in order to stir up that which He knew was in the hearts. Once He stirred up their animosity, they would in a few hours from the time of these statements, lead in the cry to crucify Him.

In verses 2-7 Jesus talked about the scribes and Pharisees, but directs

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His discussion to the disciples. However, in verses 13-36 He directs His pronouncements directly to the scribes and Pharisees. Between these two discussions, Jesus addresses the disciples in verses 8-12.

Jesus' pronouncements give us divine principles concerning the error of those who would wrongly lead God's people. In this sense, therefore, the leadership style of the scribes and Pharisees was a style of leadership we would not seek to follow. Our study is thus directed toward understanding what God does not desire in the life of those in whose hands He has entrusted His flock. Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees as ungodly leaders. They were leaders who had stolen the vineyard of God. They had pompously led the flock of God after their own desires. For this reason, Jesus sternly condemned them.

23:1,2 *The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:* They just sit there, enjoying the position of pomp. Those who would seek to lord over the flock of God desire a position as "Moses' seat" from which they can give commands to the flock. Their concept of leadership was to lead by command, not by humble service (See comments Mk 10:35-45). They did not picture themselves in service to the flock, but the flock in service to them. Lordship leaders would ask Jesus for positions as did James and John in the time of their worldly thinking concerning leadership in the kingdom. James and John requested, "*Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left in Your glory*" (Mk 10:37). The position of sitting is reminiscent of those who would seek to hand down orders, not lead by example of service. Lordship leaders focus on commands, not service.

23:3,4 *Do not do according to their works:* Jesus classifies the scribes and Pharisees' actions as an evil work. By their works they were not doing what they preached. They believed that as long as they preached the message, they could behave as the world. Such is the deception of legalistic religion. The legalist believes that as long as he maintains the correct doctrine in his mind, he can maintain ungodly attitudes in his heart. He trusts in his legal statutes to cover his unholy attitudes. But Jesus obligates the disciples to obey the pronouncements of the scribes and Pharisees in the sense that they should obey the Sinai law. However, to this law the religious leaders had added a tremendous burden of traditions that became to them legal statutes that must be kept in order to become righteous (See comments Mk 7:1-9). Though the religious leaders did not practice what they taught, at least the disciples should seek to be submissive to the will of God. ***They say and do not:*** Those who would seek to reign over the people often fall into the sin of hypocrisy. They do not practice what they preach. Jesus admonished the disciples by saying, "*Whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do ...*" ***They bind up heavy burdens:*** The scribes and Pharisees' burden of religious tradition was heavy (See At 15:10). Neither the disciples at this time, nor the religious leaders, could bear the burden of the Jews' religious traditions. They could not obey all the traditional interpretations and customs that the scribes and Pharisees had made laws in their religion. And because they

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could not keep all these traditions, they never felt justified before God. In reference to the context of what Jesus says here, there is a profound lesson concerning our relationship with law in reference to salvation. The religious leaders certainly knew that they could not keep perfectly all the inspired laws, as well as all their added traditions, in order to be justified before God. Nevertheless, that did not keep them from binding their traditions on the people. Legalistic leaders find it easy to pronounce burdens on the backs of people, when at the same time, they know that one cannot keep perfectly all such laws in order to be saved. In the text, Jesus flatly stated that they did not keep all the laws. Their hypocrisy was that they did not preach "*justice, mercy and faith*" (vs 23). They kept binding nonessential burdens on the people that could not be perfectly obeyed in order to accomplish justification before God. The problem with the scribes and Pharisees' concept of religion was not the Sinai law. The problem was in their traditions and view of justification through perfect law-keeping. However, one cannot keep God's law perfectly in order to be saved, for in works of the law no one can be justified (See Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). But in conjunction with law, the scribes and Pharisees added their host of traditions. There was certainly no possible way for one to stand justified before God on the basis of perfect law keeping in conjunction with tradition keeping (See comments intro. to Gl).

23:5-7 To be seen by men: The works that they do, Jesus said, they do for recognition. As Diotrefes, some religious leaders love to have preeminence among others (See comments 3 Jn 9,10). **They make their phylacteries broad:** Phylacteries were small leather boxes that contained scriptures. The small boxes were strapped to the forehead. That which God meant to be only a token on the foreheads of the priests—the phylacteries (Ex 13:16; Dt 6:8; 11:18)—was broadened by the scribes and Pharisees to be filled with a host of scriptures in order that they be better noticed by the people. They wanted to be considered more obedient. They enlarged the borders of their garments in order to be considered more righteous among the people. Their emphasis in religion was on the outward appearance and performance of ceremonies of a legal religion they had created after their own traditions. Jesus pronounced the following concerning such leaders who love to be seen of men. **They love the best places at feasts:** These presumptuous leaders liked to be placed on the front seats of the assemblies. They wanted to be there not only to be seen, but also to have their position of leadership reaffirmed before the people. Those "in front" were considered by the culture to be the leaders. Because of their love for position, these leaders wanted to be placed where they could be seen to be leaders. Instead of being seen as servants and slaves who were actively engaged in service to the people of God, they wanted to be in symbolic positions of leadership in public places. The lesson from the problem of these leaders is clear. Leaders should not do those things that would present or exalt their work or position. It seems that Jesus was here cautioning us not to make a show of our accomplishments or position in order to exalt ourselves above our

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brother. **They love ... greetings in the market:** The scribes and Pharisees loved to have public recognition wherever they were. Their problem was that their pompous approach to faith made it impossible for them to be spiritual leaders. **Love ... to be called, "Rabbi":** They loved the titles that would separate them from the common people. They separated themselves from and exalted themselves over those they intimidated into following them. While the followers admired their broad phylacteries and enlarged garment borders, the leaders hypocritically laid burdens on the hearts of the innocent flock. We must not miss the problem Jesus here addressed. When respect for leaders turns to exaltation, the opinions of the leaders are also exalted. Some leaders recognize this. Ungodly leaders take advantage of this over-exaltation of their word. They thus feel that their opinions are to be exalted above the voice of others. In this way, the scribes and Pharisees held the people captive to their dictates. They led the people to believe that since they had studied the law for so long, they could not possibly be wrong. But wrong they were, for they made the traditions of men the doctrine of their religiosity.

SERVANTHOOD DISCIPLESHIP

In verses 8-10 Jesus turns in His discourse to exhort the disciples. In these verses He gave three "do not's" to His disciples. He makes a contrast between the religious cultures from which they were changing to the servanthood culture of the community of God to which they were headed. He cautions the disciples about bringing concepts of their past religious culture into their behavior as His disciples.

23:8 Do not be called 'Rabbi': The term "Rabbi" carried with it the connotation that one had leadership privileges over the flock. But disciples have only one Lord and King. They must not exalt any man to the position of lord and king among themselves. When Peter went to the house of Cornelius, he would not allow Cornelius to bow down to him (At 10:25,26). Both Paul and Barnabas also feared accepting such exaltation from the people. When they healed a young man in Lystra, the people cried out that they were gods (At 14:11). They called Barnabas, Zeus and Paul, Hermes. However, both Paul and Barnabas would not allow the people to offer worship to them (At 14:14,15). It is in the nature of godly leaders to be fearful of accepting any admiration that would lead to their over-exaltation. The problem with the designation of one as "Rabbi" was the acceptance of his teaching or interpretation of Scripture to be more authoritative than a simple understanding of God's word. Thus Jesus is saying that we should not exalt any teacher's interpretation of the law to be law. Such leads us to accept the deductions of men over the simple truths of God's word. Opinions of the "Rabbis" became as authoritative as the plain declarations of God's word. When this is done, we have made the "doctors" of theology the judge and lawgivers of truth among us. Jesus carries this thought into the next verse.

23:9 Call no one your father on earth: The point Jesus addresses is the fact that the Jewish leaders considered the religious traditions of the

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fathers to be binding. In fact, Jesus said that they rejected the commandment of God in order to keep the traditions of the fathers (See comments Mk 7:9). Calling on the fathers for authority meant calling on another authority in our faith than our Father in heaven. Religious tradition must not be called upon as authoritative. Jesus knew that the keeping of religious traditions was strong among people. In fact, it was so strong in the Jewish culture that men would seek to keep religious tradition above the word of God. This is what happened to Israel. It is not wrong to do something traditionally. But if the traditional way of doing something becomes the only way it can be done, then a religious tradition has become a religious law. Once this has happened, we have added to the word of God (Cl 2:20-22; Rv 22:18,19).

23:10 *Do not be called masters:* In the disciples' society the master (teacher) was considered a leader because of his position (See Js 3:1). What Jesus is here emphasizing is that leaders are not to be followed simply because they are teachers. We must remember that Jesus is our authoritative teacher. The opinions of all other teachers of the word must never be exalted to the authority of Jesus' teaching.

GREATNESS THROUGH SERVICE

23:11 *He who is greatest ... will be your servant:* Jesus here repeats what He maintained throughout His ministry. Leadership in the community of God is by servanthood (See comments Mk 10:43,44). The scribes and Pharisees ruled by invested authority, that is, because they were "scribes" and "Pharisees" they thought their position gave them religious authority over the people. Their teachings, they thought, should be considered above the teachings of all others. After the manner of the world, they thought they could proclaim and the subjects were to obey. However, godly leaders lead by service to the needs of those they seek to lead. The burden of the group's needs is on the backs of the ones who choose to be great and first in leadership. And "great" and "first" simply mean great in service and first to serve. People follow those who service their needs.

23:12 *Will be humbled:* The ones who would exalt themselves over others, Jesus affirms, would be made low in His coming kingdom reign. It was hard for the scribes and Pharisees to accept this paradigm shift in thinking. Nevertheless, when one came to Jesus, regardless of his position in life, he had to become the servant of all if he would seek to lead the disciples (See 1 Pt 5:5). The nature of the world is to strive to exalt one's self above his fellow man. However, the nature of Christianity is submission to one's fellow man. Unless one learns the spirit of submission he has not learned the spirit of Christ.

SEVEN WOES

In the context of verses 13-36 there are seven woes that Jesus pronounces against the religious leaders of Israel. (Some manuscripts do not include the woe of the statements of verse 14 of the KJV.) These woes are Jesus' judgments as to how these religious leaders failed in their spiritual

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leadership of Israel. It is interesting to note what Jesus says concerning their failure since their failure is a definition of what God does not accept in the lives of leaders. In studying where the scribes and Pharisees went wrong, we can guard ourselves from falling into the same styles or practices of erroneous leadership.

23:13,14 *You shut up the kingdom:* The scribes (lawyers of the law) became the stumbling blocks over which people fell in coming to God. The scribes were originally students of the Scriptures. However, by the 2nd century B.C. scribes began studying and debating the interpretations of the law. In such debate among themselves, it was easy to develop the attitude that they were the only ones who could correctly interpret the law. The next step was only natural. The ordinary Jew, they supposed, could not interpret the law as they could. With this thinking came the self-exaltation of the scribes to be the authoritative interpreters of the law. As an establishment of religious leaders, the scribes were given great respect because they were responsible for maintaining the letter of the law and its application of traditional interpretations. As administrators of the law and members of the Sanhedrin (See 22:35; Mk 14:43,53; Lk 22:66; At 4:5), they stood in the way of those who sought God through the simplicity of love, justice, mercy and faith (See 23:23). They bound their interpretations and opinions on the consciences of the meek and lowly in heart. They made it impossible for one to feel good about serving God. The lesson here is clear. Those today who would be self-appointed guardians over the flock of God as the scribes and Pharisees, function in no less a capacity than the self-appointed religious judges of Jesus' day. When tradition and opinion are elevated to the status of "church law," then those who may come from a different background are often shut out of the church when they do not submit to the accepted "church laws." Though a simple God-fearing man may seek God through the weightier matters of the law as love, justice, mercy and faith, he is often shut out of the kingdom because he has not conformed to the accepted opinions and traditions of those who have set themselves as guardians of the church. Those today who would shut others out because they do not conform to accepted traditions or opinions of their particular faith, have placed themselves in the same crowd as the Pharisees and scribes. They have also heaped upon themselves the same judgments that Jesus delivered to the scribes and Pharisees in this context.

23:15 *Twice ... the son of hell as yourselves:* It was not wrong to proselyte someone to the Jewish religion. Old Testament truth was revealed from God. However, by the time of Jesus, the Jews had turned away from the Sinai law to following after the "traditions of the Fathers" (Mk 7:6-9). The traditions had become the religion of the Jews. Paul referred to this Judaism as the "sect of our religion" (At 26:5; see comments Gl 1:11-14). It was no longer God's law, but a religion that had been developed after the traditions of the Jewish religious leaders. By the 1st century, therefore, when one became a proselyte to Israel, he became a part of this system of traditional religion that was foreign to Old Testament

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truth that had been revealed by God. The scribes and Pharisees were thus proselyting people to their religion and not to God. They were converting Gentiles to their rules and regulations and not to service of God. Therefore, proselytes were first condemned in their former religious beliefs of paganism. The religions from which they came were the invention of men. They were the invention of men who had created religion after their own desires. When they were proselyted to Judaism, they were still under condemnation. All that had happened was that they had moved from one religious invention to another. They were twice a son of hell in this religion because they were led to believe that Judaism—the traditional religion of the Jews—was God's revealed religion from heaven. Actually, it was the invention of the scribes and Pharisees who had created a religion after their traditions (Mk 7:9).

23:16-22 Woe to you: In verses 16-22 Jesus refers to these religious leaders as blind guides who are "fools and blind." And rightly so, for they believed that one's oath was binding if he swore by the gold of the temple or gift at the altar. However, the scribes and Pharisees taught that if one swore by the temple or altar, that oath was not binding. **Which is more important, the gold or the temple:** In this condemnation, Jesus pointed out the absurd and inconsistent theology of these religious leaders. The temple is much greater than the gold ornaments within it. The altar is of greater significance than the sacrificial gifts laid upon it. These religious leaders reversed the importance of the temple and gold, the altar and gift. To them the gold was greater than the temple and the gift was greater than the altar. They had lost the importance of what was greater. Their priorities were wrong. Such is characteristic of those who digress to arguments over opinions in religion. They lose sight of the weightier matters of the law. This is not to say that the lighter matters are not important. The lighter matters are not opinions, but also the law. Keep in mind that opinions are from man. The weightier and lighter matters of the law are from God. Our difficulty usually comes by not being able to distinguish between what is God's law and what is our personal opinion. Sometimes in the heat of debate this distinction is clouded. And when the fog is thick, it is easy to move opinion into the realm of law.

23:23,24 Weightier matters of the law: Jesus said that they should pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin. However, the religious leaders made these things the weightier matters of the law because they lived from the contributions of the people. In doing so they neglected the weightier matters of the law that are justice, mercy and faith. They were thus emphasizing an outward form of religion without concentrating on holiness of life in the heart. Their high regard for the lesser and legal keeping of the law diverted their attention from dealing with their own unholiness. In this context Jesus emphasizes that there are some laws more important than others. In this case, justice, mercy and faith are more important in the law than tithing mint, anise and cumin. The principle is that all truth is good. However, there is some truth that is more important and must be emphasized in our obedience over lesser matters of the law. It is wrong

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to emphasize the lesser truths of the law to the neglect of the weightier principles. In other words, justice, mercy and faith are more important than tithing mint, anise and cumin. Jesus had earlier illustrated this truth in response to the Pharisees' unjust criticism of His plucking of grain in the fields on the Sabbath (See comments 12:1-8). The Pharisees argued that the disciples had violated the law (12:2). However, Jesus reminded them of what they considered a correct action on the part of David (See 1 Sm 21:1-6). David entered the house of God and ate the showbread that was lawful only for the priests to eat (Lv 24:5-9). David did violate the law. However, there was a greater law to be obeyed in the historical setting of the case. David was fleeing his enemies. It was necessary that David, God's anointed king, and his men be preserved. Therefore, in their starving situation they had to eat the bread in order to survive. This was the higher law that had to be obeyed over the lesser law that permitted only the priests to eat the showbread. Nevertheless, it was hard for the Pharisees, who had a legal understanding of the law, to understand this concept in relation to justice, mercy and faith.

23:25,26 Full of extortion and self-indulgence: These religious leaders gave great attention to the ceremonial washing of pots and pans (See Mk 7:1-9). However, by means of extortion they acquired what was in the containers. The manner by which they consumed the contents was self-indulgence. In other words, the ceremonial purification of the containers was more important than how they acquired the contents. They thought they could sinfully acquire and consume the contents, and yet, be justified by cleaning the container.

23:27,28 You are like whitewashed tombs: It was a common practice among the scribes and Pharisees to keep the appearance of tombs in a presentable order. This practice made a suitable illustration for Jesus of the true nature of their character. They appeared as righteous men by "religious behavior" according to their own standards. But inwardly, their hearts were hypocritical and lawless. The deadness of their morals and spirituality was covered by their fine dress and pompous religious behavior. They were preachers in fine suits, but full of hypocrisy and sin.

23:29-36 Abel: See Gn 4:8. **Zechariah:** See 2 Ch 24:20,21. **You are sons of those who killed the prophets:** The scribes and Pharisees gave a pretense to honor the prophets of old who had righteously stood up and preached against the sins of Israel. The religious leaders of Jesus' day gave honor to these martyred prophets by decorating their tombs. However, they were of the same spirit and character as those who murdered the prophets of God in the Old Testament. They are here in the process of scheming to murder Jesus, which scheme they carried out. In doing such, they proved that they were sons of the murderers of the prophets. Those who had murdered the prophets in the Old Testament were false prophets who had fabricated religions after their own desires. They did not know the difference between Baal and Bible. When the true prophets of God stood against these man-made religions, they suffered the persecution of misguided religious leaders. The same was happening to Jesus at the

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time He was speaking these words. It was not the Roman Empire that was against Jesus. It was the misguided zeal of self-deceived religious leaders who had fabricated a religion after their own desires.

23:37-39 Jesus saw the future of Jerusalem. He saw the destruction that was coming in A.D. 70. In these final statements to those who had stolen the sheep of God through their misguided religious zeal, He mourned over this city that had been the center of Israel's worship to God throughout the centuries. **Kills the prophets:** It was this city of misguided religious zealots that killed all those who had been sent to her with a message of repentance (See 5:12; Hb 11:32-40). As these murderers killed the Old Testament prophets, they were in the process of doing the same to Jesus. **Your house:** It was no longer the house of God. It was their temple that had become the symbol of their unrighteous hearts and religiosity that had been created after their own traditions (15:1-9; see comments Mk 7:1-9). When men forsake direction through the word of God, they move away from God. **Desolate:** The temple was desolate of spiritual leadership. For this reason, God had forsaken them (See 1 Kg 9:1ff; Jr 12:7; 22:5). **Will not see Me:** See 21:9; Ps 118:26. One sees Jesus and cries "blessed" only when he obediently falls to his knees in humble repentance and mourns over his personal sins (5:4; Js 4:8-10). Jerusalem and her misguided religionists would not repent, and thus, they would not personally see Jesus again. After His resurrection, He would appear only to the disciples. Those who come in the name of the Lord are His evangelists (See At 5:40,41; 3 Jn 7). Those who rejected Jesus in this context would thus see Jesus only through those evangelists who went forth to preach repentance toward God and obedience to the gospel.

Chapter 24

END OF NATIONAL ISRAEL

(Mk 13; Lk 21:5-36)

Unfortunately, some biblical interpreters have placed little emphasis on the consummation of national Israel that was finalized in the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Emphasis was more on the end-of-time coming and final judgment by Jesus rather than the end of national Israel by the coming of the Messiah in judgment upon Israel in time. Interpreters forgot that the Old Testament prophets, during and after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, focused the Israelites on the finality of Israel when the Messiah would come into the world. The termination of national Israel would be a tremendous social shock for the Jews, and thus God, through the prophets, prepared the minds of His people for the end of the nation. We must not rob the Israelites of these prophecies in order to satisfy our desire to follow after end-of-time speculations. As a result of the emphasis on the end of time, biblical interpreters read into the texts of Matthew 24 many end-of-time speculations.

We must always keep in mind two very important things when interpreting the book of Matthew. (1) Jesus' ministry was first to those of His immediate company, the Jews. He came to the "lost sheep of the house of

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Israel” in order to call them to repentance (10:6). He came to His own, the Jews (Jn 1:11). He came to choose the twelve apostles and commission them to a worldwide task of preaching the gospel to every creature (28:20; Mk 16:15,16; Lk 6:13). The immediate ministry of Jesus was worldwide and throughout all history until the end of time in the sense that He would continue His ministry and accomplish His task of worldwide evangelism through the global ministry of His disciples. In order to accomplish His goal, Jesus came to work within His immediate Jewish environment.

(2) Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience about Jesus as the Messiah. Matthew’s statements, therefore, have direct reference to the Jewish situation. The Jews must accept Jesus as the Messiah. They must do so because God was about to physically bring the Jewish State to a close. Those who would not accept His messiahship would probably be caught up in the destruction and close of national Israel in A.D. 70.

The pronouncements of Jesus in Matthew 24 emphasize an imminent coming of Jesus and an “end.” This imminent coming would be in the lifetime of the disciples to whom He made these statements (See 16:27,28; 23:34-36). The Holy Spirit did not inspire any New Testament writer to deceive the 1st century disciples into believing that Jesus would personally return in His final coming in their lifetime. But the context of Matthew 24 is talking about a “coming” within the lifetime of the immediate disciples. This “coming” cannot refer to the final coming of Jesus. Therefore, we approach this context from the viewpoint that Jesus was giving information to His immediate disciples about something traumatic that was going to happen in their lifetime. He was going to come in judgment in their lifetime.

Many Bible commentaries in recent years have correctly emphasized the importance of the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem in both the Old and New Testament. This has led to a more consistent interpretation of many passages throughout the Testaments. Since the destruction of Jerusalem was the primary emphasis of Jesus in this context, we would conclude that the early disciples took special note of what Jesus said. Throughout the New Testament, therefore, we would also conclude that the Holy Spirit mentioned these things again about which Jesus spoke here.

While studying the text of Matthew 24, one must consult the parallel accounts of Jesus’ words on this occasion that are recorded in Mark 13 and Luke 21. Both Mark and Luke record additional thoughts that Jesus gave in the discourse. However, neither Matthew, Mark nor Luke give the complete discourse as it was spoken by Jesus. Each inspired writer only recorded that information that emphasized the theme of his particular book. Matthew, however, gives the most complete information. For this reason, Matthew is used here as the guideline text for our interpretive comments of this historical event about which Jesus prophesied.

Also keep in mind the dates of writing of each book. Since the impending destruction was in the near future in relation to the dates of writing, we cannot but feel that this destruction in A.D. 70 was one reason that stimulated the writing of certain New Testament books in the 1st century. At least, certain portions of the New Testament letters concerning

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the destruction of Jerusalem were included in the New Testament. These portions were included in order to forewarn the Christians of the coming calamity of Israel, and thus to keep them away from Jerusalem (See comments intro. to Hb, Js, 1 & 2 Pt, Jd, Rv).

Mark wrote around A.D. 50-52, Matthew around A.D. 60, and Luke around A.D. 61,62. All three writers sensed in the political atmosphere of the times that finality to national Israel was near. As A.D. 70 drew near, the prophetic elements of Jesus' prophecy concerning national Israel were becoming clear. In order to expedite conversion from Judaism, and also encourage the converted not to return to the religion that God had set aside, Matthew, Mark and Luke write. Their writings have an air of urgency, a sense of a final call to a generation seeking for hope in a political environment that was in upheaval.

Nationalistic Pride Of The Disciples

24:1 Jesus had just pronounced judgment on the city of Jerusalem in 23:38. He had also just stated, "*Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation*" (23:36). The disciples were surely stunned by what He had said. In response to Jesus' statements, Peter, James, John and Andrew later came to Jesus privately while He was on the Mount of Olives (vs 3; Mk 13:3). At least these four disciples showed their nationalistic feelings by expressing their pride in the physical structures that Herod the Great had constructed. Surely, they were thinking that these buildings, and especially the temple, could not be destroyed by the will of God. God would not bring an end to Israel. Their nationalistic feelings were struggling against Jesus' prophecy.

Imminent Destruction Of Jerusalem

24:2 *Not be left here one stone upon another:* Jesus had prepared the disciples for this final pronouncement of judgment on Israel. The parables of 13:3-9,36-43; 21:33-46; 22:1-14, and the definitive proclamation of 23:29-39, prepared the disciples for what He was about to say in this prophecy. Jesus had earlier prophesied that the end of national Israel was at hand. The ax was laid at the root (3:10) and was to come with a destructive blow in about forty years from the time Jesus made these pronouncements. All these things of Israel would come to an end. This is the last prophecy of Jesus of the coming destruction of the temple and Jerusalem by Vespasian, Emperor of Rome, through his son Titus. This would be the final fulfillment of Moses' prophetic curse upon a people who had rejected God (Dt 28:15-68). The destruction would be great and final.

Josephus was a Jewish historian who lived during the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. He personally witnessed the war and final fall of the city of Jerusalem. In his Wars of the Jews he stated that over 1,100,000 Jews died in the destruction. The few 80,000 or so who were left were sold into captivity. The last holdouts at Masada committed suicide. The temple was burned and the city levelled to the ground. The prophecy of Jesus in Luke 19:43,44 was fulfilled in A.D. 70. "*For the days will come on you*

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that your enemies will cast a barricade around you, and encompass you and hem you in on every side, and will level you to the ground and your children within you. And they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

The destruction of the temple would be God's physical manifestation that He was finished with national Israel. He had accomplished the purpose for which Israel was established as a nation, and thus it was time to bring the nation to a close. The promises had been fulfilled to the fathers (Gn 12:1-3). The Messiah and Savior of the world had come. And thus, it was time to assimilate national Israel into spiritual Israel, the church.

The use of the pronoun "your" in 23:38 is significant. "See," Jesus said, "your house is left to you desolate." It was not God's house for the temple was never a part of the Sinai law. In the mind of God, the Jewish religious leaders had already stolen the inheritance of the vineyard (See 21:38,39). Jesus had said that they had rejected the commandments of God (Mk 7:9; see Mt 15:1-9). God would thus reject them (Hs 4:6). Paul was certainly correct by calling Judaism the Jews' religion (Gl 1:13). They no longer submitted to the word of God. Once again in their history the curse for rejecting God was coming upon them (Hs 4:6). Because Israel had rejected God and His commandments through Jesus, final judgment was coming upon her as a nation.

The Disciples Question Jesus

24:3 We can understand the astonishment of the disciples concerning the words of Jesus. They realized that He was talking about a dreadful event that was to befall national Israel. In view of the fact that they still believed that Jesus would establish a physical kingdom (At 1:6), they were having a hard time accepting His statements here concerning the destruction of the temple. **When will these things be:** When we consider the parallel accounts of Mark (13:4) and Luke (21:7), the disciples seem to be asking two questions: (1) When will the things of 23:36 happen? (2) What will be the sign of Jesus' "coming" (or "presence") and the end of the age? They still remembered Jesus' teaching in the parable of the Sower, that the tares should be left with the wheat until the time of judgment (13:29). **Your coming:** Jesus answered the above two questions in the context of Matthew 24 and 25. He used the word "coming," which is from the Greek word *parousia*. A better translation would be "presence." In other words, the disciples are asking what the sign of His presence would be. He discussed two "comings" or "presences." (1) There would be a coming ("presence") in time in judgment upon the nation of Israel. He had earlier referred to this event in 16:27,28. *"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels [messengers], and then He will reward each according to his works."* (2) By the end of chapter 25, Jesus has "thrown in" a coming in judgment at the end of time. This would be a final presence, a final judgment upon all the world. The entire context of Matthew 24 refers to the coming of judgment upon national Israel. Only in chapter 25 does Jesus turn in the discourse to final events. All "comings

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in judgment” of God in time are symbolic or typical of His final judgment at the end of time. However, we must keep in mind that the disciples at this time did not comprehend or understand Jesus’ previous discussions concerning His death, resurrection and kingdom reign. It is not probable here, therefore, that they would be asking questions concerning a final coming and judgment of Jesus. Since they did not understand the end of national Israel, so they would not be asking questions about the final coming of Jesus and judgment of the world. This does not mean, however, that Jesus did not speak concerning final things while He was with the disciples on earth. He discussed with them many things they did not fully understand. Only when such things were brought to their remembrance with the revelation of all truth, did they understand (See Jn 14:26; 16:13). **End of the age:** Jesus said, *“Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age”* (13:40). Jesus was talking about His age, not some far off event that was beyond the lifetime of the immediate disciples. The Greek work *aionios* in 13:40 is correctly translated “age” as it is so translated in 28:20. This Greek word was unfortunately translated by some versions with the word “world.” But in this context, Jesus is primarily emphasizing judgment “in time.” A secondary consideration, or application of these thoughts, is judgment at the “end of time.” The destruction of Jerusalem in time would only be a metaphor of what would happen at the unique final coming of Jesus at the end of time.

It is best to understand Matthew 24 as a type, or metaphor of the unique destruction of the world at the end of time. Jude quoted Enoch and used the judgment of the flood of Noah’s day in reference to the coming judgment upon Jerusalem for *“all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against Him”* (Jd 15,16). In the context of Matthew 24, Jesus also uses “judgment language” in order to prophesy the destruction of Jerusalem. Such language is also used in other texts in reference to the end of the world.

We are discussing two “ends” in the context of chapters 24 and 25. (1) There is the end of national Israel that would happen in the lifetime of the immediate disciples of Jesus (23:36; see Mk 9:1). Reference to “these things” center around this end (See 23:36; 24:2,8,33,34). (2) There is also the end of the world that is illustrated by the judgment and destruction of the flood in Noah’s day and the destruction of Jerusalem. In an illustrative way, therefore, the end of national Israel would illustrate the end of the world. As the typical Jew could not comprehend the end of Israel, so men today cannot comprehend the end of the world.

Warning Against Deception

24:4,5 Take heed that no one deceives you: In view of the many modern-day, self-proclaimed prophets and seers, it is little wonder that Jesus here makes this statement. He knew that at the end of national Israel there would be many self-proclaimed “messiahs” who would lead rebellions against Roman domination. Some had already come, and sub-

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sequently been squashed by Roman authorities (See At 5:36). Such messiahs and their rebellions were what eventually motivated Rome to enact a final solution to the "Jewish problem." That solution came in A.D. 70 with the termination of national Israel. Jesus' message here certainly has a secondary application to Christians of all time. Christians must be warned in every century that there are many who come "in the name of Christ," but are teaching false prophecies in order to lead people astray after traditional religion or religions that are centered around the emotional hysteria of misguided religionists (See Jr 29:8; 1 Tm 4:1,2). In verse 24 Jesus said that in the religious environment prior to the end of national Israel "*false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect.*" John possibly wrote 1 John in the few years before A.D. 70, near the end of national Israel. At least we see in 1 John a sense of finality, for John wrote, "*Little children, it is the last hour. And as you have heard that antichrist is coming, even now there are many antichrists. By this we know that it is the last hour*" (1 Jn 2:18). For this reason, John warned that Christians "*not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God ... every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not of God*" (1 Jn 4:1-3). Simply because one claims to come "in the name of Christ," and cries out "Lord, Lord," does not mean that he is a Christian. Only those who do the will of the Father in heaven should wear the Christian name (7:21). Only those who are willing to submit to the gospel of Jesus by immersion into His death, burial and resurrection will inherit eternal life (Mk 16:16). This would be the condition for salvation, the condition for deliverance from a world of turmoil and sin. Salvation, therefore, is more than simply "believing on Jesus." One's faith must be manifested in obedience. Through obedience to the will of Jesus one proclaims Jesus as his Lord. It is through this obedience, therefore, that we determine one to be of the spirit of Jesus and a true disciple. Faith is essential, but the nature of the faith that is pleasing to God is the faith that takes action to serve God (See comments Js 2:14-26).

Rumors Of Wars

24:6 Wars and rumors of wars: When Rome started her campaign against Palestine, she marched down through Asia Minor with skirmishes here and there in order to eradicate from the Empire the "Jewish scourge." There were also other wars throughout the Roman Empire that evidenced the political instability of the era. These wars would not be the end of national Israel. They would only indicate the beginning of the end. But such wars would be a warning to Christians who were in Jerusalem to leave the city. ***All these things must come to pass:*** Jesus is here giving pronouncements of prophecy that would be spoken among the disciples throughout the Roman Empire. Jewish Christians were to take heed to these prophetic utterances. If they did not, they might continue to cling to the traditional Jewish Passover/Pentecost journey to Jerusalem. Subsequently, they might possibly be entrapped in the city when the Roman armies came. One reason Jesus was giving these warnings, therefore,

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was for the sake of the early Jewish Christians. They must take heed to these warnings and stay away from Jerusalem when the hour approached (See comments Hb). As gospel-obedient disciples they would eventually understand that the existence of national Israel was for the purpose of bringing the Redeemer into this world.

The Consequences Of War

24:7 The internal strife in the Roman Empire only increased its intolerance of any who would cause disorder. In the two year period before the destruction of Jerusalem, Galba, Otho and Vitellius struggled to seize power in order to become Caesar of Rome. Insurrectionist movements occurred throughout the Empire. At one time about 50,000 Jews were killed in an insurrectionist movement in Seleucia. Another similar movement led to the death of about 20,000 Jews in Caesarea. **There will be famines:** Famines occurred throughout the Empire prior to A.D. 70. Agabus had prophesied of one in Acts 11:28. Paul dealt with another with the "famine contribution" of 1 Corinthians 16:1-3. **Earthquakes:** In conjunction with the famines, earthquakes seemed to have plagued the Mediterranean area in the years prior to A.D. 70. Ancient historians recorded at least eight major earthquakes in the area in the few years before the end of national Israel in A.D. 70. Luke records that Jesus also said that pestilence, or disease and plagues, would occur. Such pestilence usually accompanies famines. Pestilence would intensify the trauma of the wars. In God's judgments of apostate Israel in the Old Testament, He brought upon them famine and pestilence in order to bring them to repentance. We would conclude that the same purpose for the famine and pestilence before A.D. 70 came for the same reason.

The Beginnings Of Sorrows

24:8 Beginning of sorrows: The events of verses 6 and 7 would only be the beginning of the sorrows. Such would not constitute the end. Unfortunately, the disciples must live in the midst of these sorrows. They could not escape their environment. Specifically, the Jewish Christians must live in a hostile environment that is against that message which they preach (See intro. to 1 Pt). The environment is hostile simply because Satan is the prince of this world who has deceived the masses of humanity. Those he has deceived make the world difficult for Christians. Luke also adds that "great signs from heaven" would be seen (Lk 21:11). This would possibly be the unusual occurrence of heavenly phenomena that some would interpret as "signs of the end."

Hated For Jesus' Name

24:9 Deliver you up to be afflicted: Luke is more explanatory in his record. Before the finality of "these things" (the destruction of Jerusalem), he records what Jesus said, "*They [the enemies of the disciples] will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and rulers for My name's sake*"

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(Lk 21:12). The apostles would be tormented in their ministry (10:17). Jesus was certainly talking about the persecution of the early disciples because of the mention of “synagogues.” This is specific and Jewish in context. And this is exactly what happened (See At 4:1-22; 5:17-40; 8:3,4; 12:1-5; 16:23; 21:33-40; 24:23-27; 28:30). It is worthy of note that Mark records that this discourse was delivered privately to Peter, James, John and Andrew (Mk 13:3). James would be the first martyred apostle (At 12:1-5). Peter and the others would suffer extensively at the hands of the persecuting Jews (See comments At 14:22). **Hated:** The disciples were hated by the persecuting Jews. But this hate by the Jews would not match that which would be heaped upon the disciples by the end of the 1st century. Rome would eventually unleash its power against the disciples. When Nero was Caesar during the middle of the 60s, he launched in Rome a personal vendetta against those who claimed the name of Jesus. But this was only the beginning of Roman persecution against Christians. Such “hate” had been spoken before by the Lord (Jn 15:18,19; see Jn 10:17-19; At 3:4; 7:59; 12:2; 16:23; 18:12; 24:26; 28:22). Persecution of the early Christians was so prevalent that the early evangelists exhorted and comforted new Christians with the teaching that they would suffer (See Jn 16:1-3; At 14:22; 2 Tm 3:12). There were, therefore, two forces that persecuted the early Christians. The first was Jewish persecution that was first led in the beginning by Saul (At 9:1-3). This persecution eventually extended throughout many places of the Roman Empire. The second persecution was carried out by the head of the Roman Empire. Nero launched this personal vendetta against Christians in the middle 60s. However, all historical evidence indicates that this persecution was localized in and around Rome. It was not until the reign of Domitian that Roman State persecution was launched against Christianity throughout the Empire. In Rome’s early persecutions of Jews, the Roman State made little distinction between Jews and Christians. Christians were only considered a sect of Judaism. And since Judaism was causing the incessant problems of Palestine, Rome launched reprisals against both Jews and Christians. It is also significant to note from this context, and the context of John 16:1-3, that persecution would also come from those who were religious, and thus, believed that they were serving God by persecuting Christians. Even Rome’s persecution was instituted by religious leaders of Roman religion (See comments Rv 13). Persecution of Christians rarely comes from the state alone. It is usually generated by religions that seek to dispel competitive religious beliefs within the state, and thus seeks to suppress all other religious beliefs. A false religion can be determined by its will to suppress all other faiths by use of the sword of the state.

The Offended And The Betrayed

24:10 Many will be offended: Those with weak faith who were offended, or who were ashamed of the gospel (See Rm 1:16), would succumb to the pressure of persecution. They would call Caesar lord at the demand of Roman soldiers who had the power to kill them. They would

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inform on fellow brothers and sisters who were Christians (See comments Ph 1:12-18). But Jesus said, "*Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me*" (11:6). Luke records the extent to which some would go in their betrayals. Christians would be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends (Lk 21:16). Knowing that these first disciples would be in such trying situations, specifically the Christ-sent apostles, Jesus promised that He would through the Holy Spirit reveal to them what to say when under trial (Lk 21:14,15). There is a practical principle here we must not overlook. Those who would take a stand for truth will be persecuted by the deceived. When one preaches truth, Satan, will not be silent. He will not stand at ease while his kingdom is ravaged by the truth of the gospel. The evangelist who goes forth and finds it surprising that there are those religiously misguided people who oppose him, has much to learn about the conflict between good and evil in this world.

False Preachers

24:11 *Deceive many:* Here again Jesus emphasizes the concept of deception. Jesus knew man's fickle nature to follow after man. He knew the "sheep nature" of people to seek for a shepherd (Mk 6:34). This urge to seek for a shepherd is so strong that innocent, if not gullible, sheep would follow after any self-proclaimed prophet who might show some religious inclinations and leadership. Jesus knew that there would be those who would take advantage of the innocence of the sheep. Therefore, He warned the sheep that false prophets would come in among them as ravenous wolves (7:15). These imposters would often "practice sorcery," "astonish the people," and claim that they were "someone great" (At 8:9-11). Paul warned that from the elders of the church men would arise speaking perverse things (At 20:30). But he warned that such were false prophets who sought to deceive the people as masquerading apostles (2 Co 11:13; see 2 Pt 2:1,2; Gl 1:6-9; 1 Tm 4:1-4; 2 Tm 3:1-9; 1 Jn 4:1; Jd 11,16). The fact that both Jesus and the inspired writers warned of false teachers is enough to alert us to always be on guard against such. The only way to be on guard is to know well that which protects us against erroneous teachings. We must know the Bible. Biblically ignorant people do not guard against false teachers. They only persecute those who preach the truth.

Lawlessness And Lovelessness

24:12 *Lawlessness will abound:* It will be a social environment where men do not submit to the laws of either God or man. Human relationships will digress to animal instincts. There is no love of one's neighbors in a state of anarchy. For this reason, God ordained governmental law (Rm 13:1,2). Anarchy among rebellious Jews would bring judgment upon themselves in A.D. 70. Because the Jews continually fought against the Roman occupation of Palestine, Rome unleashed her judgment upon the anarchists. ***The love of many will grow cold:*** In times of trial and persecution it is easy for some to fall from the love of the brethren (Compare 1 Tm 1:8,9; Rv 2:4,5). When men refuse to submit to God, they will

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not submit to one another. Submission to one's fellow man begins with a humble submission to the will of God. But when arrogance is admired, humble submission is discouraged. The arrogance of the Jews was what led to their uprising against the Romans, and subsequently, Rome's eventual crushing of the Jews.

Endure To The End

24:13 *He who will endure:* Those who remain faithful while in the midst of persecution, apostasy and tribulation will be delivered from the end of national Israel (See Rv 2:10). They will be spared (10:22). Jesus even promised the disciples that not a hair of their head will be lost in the destruction (Lk 21:18). However, the condition not to fall victim to the calamity that was coming was to heed Jesus' warning concerning the destruction (See Lk 21:36). We can now see why Jesus was giving these immediate disciples the information of this discourse. Those who believed these pronouncements would not fall victim to the certain destruction of Jerusalem. The faithful would save their lives if they heeded these warnings. Those Jewish Christians who were still clinging to Judaism had to make a decision. They had to relinquish loyalty to Jerusalem and the temple and cling to Jesus. We can see in the contexts here why Jerusalem and the temple had to go. There was too much Jewish sentimentality connected to both the city and the temple. By A.D. 70 God would have been patient with Israel for forty years after the cross. In A.D. 70, it was time to cut national Israel off. Jewish Christians had to move on, on to a Christianity that was neither culturally nor nationalistically linked to Judaism or held up by an attachment to physical structures, leaders, or a particular cultural group (See comments Jn 4:20-26). The end, therefore, would be a paradigm shift that would purify Christianity of Judaism. Throughout history God does such things in order to bring us back to Him.

Preaching To The Empire

24:14 *This gospel ... will be preached:* The good news of Jesus' death and resurrection would be preached to all parts of the Roman Empire, before the destruction of A.D. 70. ***All the world:*** "All the world" is here certainly a reference to the Roman Empire as the phrase is so used in Luke 2:1 when Caesar Augustus sent a decree throughout all the world. This was not a decree that was sent to the entire world. The idiomatic expression "all the world" referred only to those who were under Roman jurisdiction. This same meaning is in Romans 1:8 when Paul said that the faith of the Roman Christians was known throughout the Roman Empire (See Rm 10:18; 15:19,24-28; Ph 1:13; Cl 1:6,23). The Roman Christians' faith was certainly not spoken of throughout the rest of the geographical world. Reference to "the whole world" is again to the perimeters or jurisdiction of the Roman Empire. In Romans 10:18 Paul does use the phrase "all the earth," or "ends of the world," to refer to the complete world. Keep in mind, however, that Romans 10:18 was a quotation from Psalm 19:4. In prophetic language it is stated in the past tense. Paul quoted it in the past

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tense as it was written by David. This does not mean, therefore, that at the time Paul quoted Psalm 19 in Romans 10 that it had been completely fulfilled. In Romans 15:24-28 Paul desired to go to Spain and preach the gospel. The gospel had evidently not yet gone to Spain. Therefore, when he made the statement of Romans 10:18, the gospel at the time of his writing the letter of Romans had not yet literally gone to "all the earth" or "ends of the world." In the context of Matthew 24, therefore, we would understand that the meaning of "all the world" refers to the extent of the Roman Empire. The practical reason for the preaching of the gospel to the Roman Empire before the destruction of Jerusalem is obvious. During the Passover/Pentecost feast, Jews of the Roman Empire would make the long journey to Jerusalem to celebrate this great Jewish feast. On the particular Passover/Pentecost feast of the Acts 2 events, there were Jews in Jerusalem from the eastern extent of the Roman Empire, that is, Parthia and Media. There were Jews from the southern extent of the Roman Empire in North Africa. There were Jews from all Asia and Italy. This journey to Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost was a very precious event in the lives of devout Jews. In the context of Matthew 24, therefore, Jesus was giving a warning to the disciples throughout the Roman Empire in order to save their lives. When the gospel was preached to the Jewish inhabitants of the Roman Empire, they were to give up the Sinai law that mandated that Jewish males appear before the Lord on the Passover (Ex 12; 23; Nm 9). Those Jews who obeyed the gospel would be taught the prophecy of Matthew 24. They would thus stay away from Jerusalem. When the Roman army did come to Jerusalem in A.D. 70, they came at the time of the Passover. Those Jewish Christians who lived outside Judea believed the message of Matthew 24, and thus, were not there. Those resident Christian Jews of Jerusalem had fled before the coming of the Roman army (Compare At 8:4).

The Abomination Of Desolation

24:15-18 Abomination of desolation: The abomination of desolation would be the pagan Roman army in Judea. The army would be there to desecrate the temple. The presence of Rome's army would be an abomination to the Jews. However, it would be the will of God, who was by proxy, bringing judgment on Israel through the power of the Roman army. Luke records, "*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near*" (Lk 21:20). Daniel had prophesied of this event in Daniel 9 & 11. Jesus was saying, therefore, that we must understand that the A.D. 70 event was the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy (See Mk 13:14). Daniel said, "*And the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it will be with a flood, and until the end of the war desolations are determined*" (Dn 9:26,27). Forces "*will defile the sanctuary fortress. Then they will take away the daily sacrifices and place there the abomination of desolation*" (Dn 11:31). "*And there will be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation*" (Dn 12:1; see 12:11). Antiochus Epiphanes first desecrated the altar of

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Jerusalem by offering a pig on the altar. However, the final desecration would happen when the Roman army would destroy the altar in the destruction of the temple. **Flee into the mountains:** At the beginning of the time of destruction, the resident Christians of Judea must flee. They must heed Jesus' warnings in order to perceive that the end of national Israel was near. The urgency by which they must flee is here revealed. In the ancient cities one could actually go from house to house on the roof tops of the houses. The houses were joined together so that one could simply go from one roof to another. Jesus says that they must not take the time to return to their houses for coveted possessions when they see the chance to escape the city. They must flee with what they have in hand. Jesus also warned that no one is to go to Judea during these days (Lk 21:21). This warning was possibly to those who might travel to Jerusalem and be caught in the war that was to rage throughout Judea. Jesus' warning, therefore, was to save lives, the lives of those Jewish Christians who might still be honoring the Jewish feasts. The Roman army of Titus was under the command of Cestius Gallus. For some reason during the destruction of the city, he removed his encircling army from the city for a brief period of time. This gave all resident Christians of Jerusalem time to flee. This was possibly the time Jesus said that they must not come down from their roof tops. They must take the window of opportunity and flee from the city.

Pray For Flight

24:19,20 Pray: It would be difficult for pregnant women to flee during the war. Those with small nursing babies would also have difficulty in the flight from Judea. The prayers of the saints evidently had some determining factor as to when this destruction would occur, for Jesus asked them to pray that such not happen in winter when the journey of flight would be difficult. They must also pray that their flight not begin on the Sabbath, for fanatical Jews would close the city gates on the Sabbath and hinder any from leaving the city.

Great Tribulation

24:21 There will be great tribulation: Daniel prophesied that no nation from the beginning of time would have suffered as Israel was about to suffer at the hand of the Roman army. He wrote, "*And there will be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation*" (Dn 12:1; see Dn 9:26). It would be a destruction that would occur over a few months, but a destruction that would terminate a nation forever. The siege occurred during the Passover, the time when the most "faithful," or at least fanatical Jews were in Jerusalem. These Jews were trapped in the city. Over one million perished. The rest were sold into slavery. It was a time that the Jewish nation suffered more in just a few months than any nation before them. In fact, it was a time when national Israel, as a chosen nation of God, died.

War Shortened For Christian's Sake

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24:22 No life would be saved: God would shorten those days of the war. If the rate of killing Jews continued as it did during the battle, the slaughter of all Jews throughout the Roman Empire would have resulted in their annihilation. The killing would have spilled over into the community of Christian Jews. But for the sake of the Christian Jews, God would not allow the killing to continue past the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, the destruction was contained in Judea. **For the elect's sake:** Titus expedited the battle against Jerusalem in order to hurry back to Rome. However, the battle continued for about five months. Josephus records that the Roman army crucified about 30,000 Jews outside the city walls. Titus did such in order to discourage the Jews within the city, and thus, expedite their surrender. But the Jews persisted until both the city and temple were destroyed. And thus we learn that those who reject Jesus do so with hardened hearts.

False Proclamations

24:23 Do not believe it: Jesus again emphasized the concept that believers not be led astray by the deceptions of false messiahs. In time of national calamity He knew that the people would seek for a national savior. There would be those self-proclaimed deliverers who would seek to lead the nation in rebellion against Rome. Jesus tells the disciples not to follow such false guides. When the disciples later asked in Acts 1:6, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel," Jesus knew that they still retained nationalistic hopes. In the context of Matthew 24, therefore, He gives teachings upon which they could reflect when the countdown started toward A.D. 70. They could reflect on what Jesus said in this discussion and know that His intention was not to establish a physical kingdom reign here on earth. It was never His intention to do so. It will not be His intention to do so when He comes again. Jesus' kingdom reign was always planned to be from heaven, not from this earth.

False Messiahs And Prophets

24:24 False christs and false prophets: False christs and prophets would arise in the time of calamity in order to call people after futile causes, particularly the survival of national Israel. They would deceive people by assuming that they could work signs and wonders. These magical tricks of wonder would be so good among the false messiahs and prophets of the Jews that even some Christians would fall victim to their deceptions. **Show great signs and wonders:** These "signs and wonders" could not be real miracles simply because Jesus says here that Christians might be deceived into believing them. The point is that they would not be deceived if the supposed miracles were true. One is not deceived when he believes that which is true and real. This context is similar to Paul's warning in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 where he stated that there would come those who worked lying wonders. In the 2 Thessalonians text the word "lying" modifies power, signs and wonders. All supposed miracles of Satan are false. Those who work deceptive powers, signs and wonders, are the instruments of deception. But Paul warns that "*such are false apostles,*

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deceitful workers, transforming themselves as apostles of Christ" (2 Co 11:13). They are not deceivers because they work true miracles. They are deceivers because they claim that what they do is the miraculous work of God. Jesus said, "**Be not deceived.**" **The elect:** All Christians are elect of God (1 Pt 1:2,10; 2:6), for in the end they will be elected out of the world for eternal salvation in heaven.

Forewarning

24:25 I have told you: Jesus told the disciples these things beforehand in order to prepare them to believe in Him when His prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem was fulfilled. He made a similar statement in John 13:18 after quoting Psalm 41:9 in reference to the betrayal of Judas (See comments Jn 18:19). The false workers about whom Jesus spoke existed in the times preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. Such false religious workers have prevailed throughout history. Christians, therefore, who would be disciples of Jesus must heed His warnings concerning such people (See 2 Pt 3:1-4). Peter stated that in the last days of national Israel, there would be those who would mock Christians for their belief in the consummation of national Israel by the coming of the Lord (2 Pt 3:1-4). The words of Jesus in Matthew 24 were in the mind of Peter when he made the statements of 2 Peter 3. He stirred his audience to remembrance by reminding them that they were in the last days. He wrote the letter of 2 Peter between A.D. 65 and 67. This was only a short time before the destruction was to begin. He reminded the people that Jesus was manifested in the last times of national Israel (1 Pt 1:20). The Hebrew writer stated to the Jewish Christians that God had spoken through Jesus in the last days of Israel (Hb 1:2). This was the "fullness of the time," (Gl 4:4) and the end of the age of Israel (Ep 1:10). It was in the last times of national Israel that God sent forth His Son. The last days in these statements does not refer to the last days of the world, but to the end of national Israel in A.D. 70. It was the "last times," the last times of national Israel. Jude and James also wrote just a few years before the fall of Jerusalem (See Jd 17). The few years preceding A.D. 70 were the last times of national Israel. God was bringing judgment upon the wicked vinedressers (the Jewish religious leadership) who attempted to steal the fruit and inheritance of the vineyard (See comments 21:33-45). National Israel had rejected God, and thus, God was rejecting national Israel. National Israel's persecution of the "Israel by faith" was coming to an end. James wrote to suffering Jewish Christians of the Roman Empire around A.D. 62 or 63. He comforted the persecuted "Israel by faith" (the church) by saying that the coming of the Lord was at hand (Js 5:7,8). James was not talking about a "coming of the Lord" at the end of time. Discussion concerning a coming at the end of time would not have been an encouragement to his immediate readers. The "coming" in the context here is about judgment in time upon the nation of Israel. National Israel was the primary persecutor of Christians before A.D. 70. Jesus' "coming in judgment" upon Israel was at hand, that is, it was near unto happening. In Matthew 24 Jesus was explaining the calam-

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ity of national calamity that would come forty years after the establishment of the church in A.D. 30.

Manifested Coming

24:26,27 Do not believe it: Before the end of national Israel there were those false christs (messiahs) who led gullible Jews into the wilderness in hope of deliverance from Rome. Jesus is here warning the disciples not to accept anyone who would lead them into believing that the Christ would come in time in a manner that would be characteristic of His final coming. When Jesus comes at the end of time it will not be a happening that must be communicated by people to people. It will be a happening that will be at the sound of the last trumpet, with the voice of an archangel (1 Th 4:15,16). In other words, Jesus says that if they are told that "the Christ" has come, they should not believe it, for the next personal coming of Jesus will be worldwide and heavenly announced. There will be no preaching of the gospel return of the Son of God, for the entire world will believe, but it will be too late.

Consumption Of The Carcass

24:28 Carcass ... vultures: The carcass was the Jewish national carcass of Israel. The gathered vultures was the Roman army that came to consume the nation. When the disciples started seeing the gathering of the Roman army over Palestine as vultures gather over a dead carcass, they would know that the destruction of the spiritually dead Israel was about to happen.

Downfall Of National Israel

24:29 Immediately after ... those days: The great tribulation of verse 21 would precede the final destruction of the city. Therefore, immediately after the tribulation of those days, the splendor of the Jewish nation would fall by the destruction of Israel's pride, the city of Jerusalem and the temple. **Sun will be darkened:** Jesus uses apocalyptic judgment language from the Old Testament to portray the fall of the nation. Such language was commonly used by inspired writers in the Old Testament to symbolize the fall of nations (See Is 13:6-18; 14:12; 24:23; 34:4; Jr 4:23,24; Ez 32:7,8; Dn 8:10; Jl 2:30-32). The sun usually represented the king or monarch of the nation. The heavenly bodies represented the rest of the government officials. We must not allow ourselves to become inconsistent in understanding Jesus' use of this figurative language by affirming this to be a literal falling of the sun, moon and stars. If taken literally, to where would the sun, moon and stars fall? We should consistently interpret such language as it was used in the Old Testament. It is symbolic language that refers to the fall of an earthly kingdom. **Powers of the heavens will be shaken:** When God shakes the heavens, there is great change on earth among the nations. This is the meaning of the figure in Haggai 2:6,7 from which Jesus draws this figure, "shaking the powers of the heavens." God was going "to shake" heaven and earth in order to sift out of national

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Israel those who could not be shaken because they had submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus in their hearts. This is precisely what the Hebrew writer stated when he wrote a few years before A.D. 70 (See comments Hb 12:26,27). National Israel was being physically removed in order to allow the "Israel by faith" to shine forth as the true people of God. These are the people who cannot be shaken (Hb 12:28).

The Sign Of The Son

24:30 Sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven: Jesus had earlier spoken to His disciples on the subject of His coming judgment. He had said that this coming (presence) would be "*in the glory of His Father with His angels [messengers]*" (16:27). Jesus had said in chapter 16 that some of His immediate disciples would experience this coming (16:28; Mk 9:1). So the sign here in verse 30 is discussing what Jesus had previously prophesied. When the Roman army eventually came, such would be God's final signal that we believe in Jesus who made this prophecy. The fulfillment would be God's last proof of Jesus as the Messiah. **See:** The word "see" (*horao*) could be translated "perceive" or "discern." When all these things happen, men would perceive the judgment of Jesus on Jerusalem. **Son of Man coming on the clouds:** "Coming on the clouds" is judgment language from the Old Testament (Is 19:1; Jr 4:13; Ez 30:3; Dn 7:13). When Jesus brings this judgment through the Roman army, then people will perceive the judgment power of the Son. The disciples would thus witness the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy. They would understand that Daniel 7:13,14 had been fulfilled. Daniel 7:13,14 speaks of the ascension of Jesus, for Jesus ascended unto the Ancient of Days who is the Father. However, before Jesus ascended to heaven, all authority in heaven and earth had been given to Him (28:18; Jn 13:3; 17:2). Many would not realize this until the physical fulfillment of the prophecy Jesus was making here in this chapter. When Jesus came in judgment on Jerusalem, then men realized that Jesus was exalted as King of kings and reigning over all things (Ep 1:21; 1 Tm 6:15; see Ph 2:9-11). Jesus was Lord of lords and King of kings before A.D. 70 (1 Tm 6:15). However, true Israel by faith did not "*shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*" (13:43) until after national Israel was shaken. When national Israel was taken away, the true Israel (the church), that could not be shaken, shined forth in the kingdom. This was a marvel, "a sign," that the disciples would experience in their lifetime. If reference in this verse is not to the ascension of Jesus to the Father by the coming in the clouds, then the figure is to coming in judgment. It is a figure from the Old Testament that signified God's coming in judgment upon the unrighteous (Is 19:1; Jr 4:13; Ez 30:3). This could possibly be what Jesus is here signifying. He indicates this same thought during His trial when He stated to the high priest that he would see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God and coming in judgment on the clouds of heaven (26:64). Of course the high priest would not literally see Jesus at the right hand of the Father with all authority. Only Stephen had that privilege (At 7:55). However, the high priest of Israel at the time

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of the judgment would see this power manifested by the judgment of God through the proxy of the Roman army. Those unbelieving Jews who experienced the destruction of Jerusalem certainly wondered why God was judging them. The disciples before A.D. 70 recognized the kingdom reign of Jesus. This kingdom reign would be manifested after A.D. 70 by the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy here in Matthew 24. The destruction possibly encouraged many disheartened Jews to turn to Jesus. This is possibly what Paul referred to when he mentioned their conversion in the context of Romans 9-11. A partial blindness had truly come among the Jews. It happened from the time of the establishment of the church in A.D. 30 to the time of the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, a time of 40 years, which was possibly symbolic of the 40 years of wilderness wanderings when the unbelieving Jews fell in the desert of the Sinai wilderness. This was the time when the fullness of the Gentiles was completed in the sense that the early evangelists went to the Gentiles because they were rejected by national Israel (See comments Rm 11:25,26). Israel would be saved in the same manner as the Gentiles, that is, through obedience to the gospel. However, because of the stubborn nature of some Jews, they had to experience the destruction of the symbol of their religious heritage, before they would understand that God was finished with national Israel. The Messiah had come and Israel must accept the new King and kingdom of the Messiah.

Sending Forth Of Evangelists

24:31 He will send His messengers with a great sound: The Greek word *angelos* is translated "messengers" in this text. It is so translated in Matthew 11:10, "*Behold, I send My messenger ["angelos"] before Your face*" It is so translated in Luke 7:24, "*When the messengers ["angelos"] of John had departed*" Also, Jesus "*sent messengers ["angelos"] before His face*" to Jerusalem (Lk 9:52; see 2 Co 12:7; Js 2:25). Because some translators have believed that Matthew 24 refers to the end of time, they have translated the word *angelos* to refer to heavenly angels. But the context does not warrant this translation. Jesus was not historically leaping from a context of events that would transpire in A.D. 70 to events that might occur over two thousand years later. **They will gather together:** Jesus did send His messengers forth (28:19; Mk 16,15-20). The disciples were dispersed from Jerusalem in Acts 8:4 in order to take the message of the gospel throughout the world. Those who would believe were gathered together into the body of Christ, the new Jerusalem that had come down out of heaven (See comments Rv 21). Those who recognized that all things were fulfilled (5:18) came to Jesus. They converted from Jewish theocratic nationalism to spiritual revivalism. They realized that the new Israel was spiritual and was not confined to race (See comments Gl 3:28,29). **Sound of a trumpet:** The messengers (evangelists) went forth with the sound of a trumpet. This was symbolic language taken from the Old Testament. The trumpet was sounded in Israel as a warning of impending danger (Nm 10:2; Jl 2:1ff; Is 27:13). The disciples went forth not only with the message of hope in the gospel, but also the message of

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Matthew 24. Those Jews who did not obey the gospel would possibly suffer their own physical destruction in the calamity of A.D. 70. If those who refused to obey the gospel did not suffer the destruction of A.D. 70, then they would in final judgment face another destruction (2 Th 1:7-9).

Parable Of The Fig Tree

24:32,33 *When you see all these things:* The meaning of the parable from the fig tree was given in order to illustrate the nearness of the destruction as indicated by Jesus' statements of verses 5-29. The fig tree puts forth her tender branches and leaves in the spring. Such indicates that summer is coming. The happening of the events of verses 5-29 would indicate the nearness of the destruction of Jerusalem. The disciples would understand that the coming of the Lord in judgment in time was at hand (Jn 5:9).

Fulfillment Of "This Generation"

24:34 *This generation:* Some of those of Jesus' generation, the generation to whom Jesus was speaking, would not die before all that He had just said had occurred. This verse is certainly parallel with what Jesus said in 16:27,28. Thus the disciples would go from city to city, preaching the gospel of the kingdom. This would be their message of hope. However, the messengers would also have on their lips a message of doom for national Israel. In their preaching, the unbelieving Jews would persecute them from city to city (10:23). Because of the Jews' persecution of the messengers, God would bring judgment upon national Israel in order to confirm His messengers. Before Jesus arrived at this context of His message to the disciples in Matthew 24, He had stated, "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation" (23:36). **All these things are fulfilled:** "These things" refer to the events of the coming destruction. These things would "come upon this generation." God would bring the punishment of judgment upon the generation to whom Jesus personally ministered because they had personally rejected Him (See 12:41,42; Jn 1:11). Jesus' generation would receive a more harsh judgment because they had personally witnessed the presence of the Son of God. The harsh judgment would be that they would not die a natural death, but in the calamity of the fall of national Israel. The destruction of Jerusalem, therefore, was not only God's intended time to terminate a dispensation of work through Israel, it was His judgment upon a generation that personally rejected His Son.

The Word Endures Forever

24:35 *My words will not pass away:* Jesus seems to comfort the disciples at this point in this most terrifying proclamation. No matter what the national calamity might be, they must trust in the word of God that endures forever. Peter possibly reflected on the thought of this statement of Jesus when he wrote just a few years before Jerusalem's destruction that the word of God endures forever (1 Pt 1:24,25). Because of his nationalistic thinking,

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it is doubtful that Peter realized what Jesus was saying to the disciples in Matthew 24. Nevertheless, he, as well as the other disciples at hand, would soon realize that they could not put their faith in any nation, even though it had been ordained by God some 1,400 years before to bring the Blessing of Abraham into the world (Gn 12:1-3). The only thing that would permeate the destruction of all things would be the word of God. Eventually, the present heaven and earth would pass away (2 Pt 3:10,11). But the pronouncements of the Lord endure forever. Jesus assumed that they will wholeheartedly trust in His proclamations concerning national Israel.

Time Of The Destruction

24:36 *That day and hour no one knows:* “That day” is here a generic term as “the Sabbath” is in verse 20. In other words, this was “that time of destruction.” The indication is not in reference to a specific 24-hour day, but to the time when the destruction would occur. While on earth, Jesus did not know this time, for the saints had not yet prayed that it not be in the winter or on a Sabbath. The exact time had not yet been determined by the Father. Neither did the angels know. At the time Jesus was making these pronouncements, it was not necessary that either He or the angels be aware of the actual time of the destruction. Luke’s account of Jesus’ statement helps us to better understand the flow of the text in order to understand “that day” to refer to the context of the destruction of Jerusalem. Luke recorded that it would come at an unexpected time in the lives of the disciples (Lk 21:33-36). Therefore, they must watch in reference to what Jesus had just told them. Those Jews who were consumed in the affairs of the world would certainly not believe in Jesus or His prophecy, let alone expect the coming judgment upon Jerusalem. In fact, Peter stated that they would be mocking this belief of Christians (2 Pt 3:3,4). Of course, the scoffers had forgotten the flood of Noah’s day. They had forgotten Sodom and Gomorrah. Those who flee from the judgments of God willingly forget that they must be accountable for their sins. Regardless of their forgetfulness, however, God would bring this judgment upon Jerusalem. The key word here is “watch.” Mark records more information that Jesus gave at this point in the discourse (See Mk 13:33-37).

Wicked Taken Away

24:37-39 *Coming:* The “coming” in judgment on Jerusalem about which Jesus was talking would be as the days of Noah. Both the flood of Noah’s day and the destruction of Jerusalem were “comings” of the Lord in judgment in time. However, the final coming of Jesus in judgment at the end of time will be different. The flood of Noah’s day and the destruction of Jerusalem may be typical of the final coming. However, we must understand that nothing has ever happened in the history of man that will fully explain what will happen at the end of time. Therefore, all illustrations to the “end of time” judgment must be understood in a way that cannot be fully comprehended by comparing happenings of events in time with events that will transpire at the end of time. The New Testament writers took that

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which was literal, and had actually happened in history, to illustrate that which will happen at the end of time. We must keep in mind, however, that these historical events that are metaphorically used to illustrate final judgment do not fully explain what will happen when Jesus comes again.

Days of Noah: Jerusalem's destruction will be as it was in the days of Noah (See Gn 7:6-23). God sent the flood because of the wickedness of man (Gn 6:5). Such wickedness would be characteristic of the unbelieving Jews who crucified the Son of God. They were hardened against repentance, though they personally experienced the miraculous confirmation of God directly from heaven (Jn 3:2). Men were more concerned about the material aspects of existence than spiritual matters. The Pharisees lustfully consumed the financial help the children were to give to their parents (Mk 7:9-13). The rich Sadducean Jews had "*lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury*" (See Js 5:1-6). They had cheated in the wages that were due to their laborers (Js 5:4). As it was in the days of Noah, so it would be in the days of Israel before A.D. 70. **Eating and drinking:** In verses 37-40 Jesus was saying that people would be living their own normal wicked and materialistic lives prior to "that day" of destruction. It was this way in the days of Noah. It would be the same in the destruction of national Israel. And, it will be the same at the end of time. Those who reject the pronouncements of the word of God see only those things of this world. They refuse to submit to the "coming of the Lord" in judgment.

The Righteous Are Left

24:40,41 One will be taken and the other left: Here is another similarity between the times of Noah and the destruction of Jerusalem. When the flood came, righteous Noah and his family entered the ark. The flood then came and took away the wicked. Only the righteous were left safely in the ark. So it would be in the destruction of Jerusalem. The wicked would be taken and the righteous would be left. Jesus said that two men would be in the field. One would be taken and the other left. Some have taught that when Jesus comes at the end of time the righteous will be taken from the earth and the wicked will be left. In their attempt to force this passage to refer to the end of time, they twist the Scriptures (See 2 Pt 3:15,16). Simply keep in mind that Jesus' use of the flood of Noah's day to illustrate the events of the destruction of Jerusalem is to show that in the destruction "*the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father,*" for it would be the righteous who would be left (13:43). The wicked would be taken. At the end of time when Jesus comes, He will take the righteous from the earth (1 Th 4:17). In the context of Matthew 24, however, it is the wicked who are taken. Though the destruction of Jerusalem illustrates the coming of Christ in judgment at the end of time, the context here clearly shows that the end of time is not under consideration.

Watch

24:42 Watch: The term "day" is here used with a generic meaning. It is not a specific 24-hour day, as "the day" of verse 36 was not a specific

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24-hour solar day. Reference is to a time when all this would take place. Emphasis is on the fact that there would be a specific time in history when all this would happen, though the time of the destruction of national Israel would occur over a period of days and months. The point is that believers must continue to watch lest they become caught up in the affairs of the world. And such is a general exhortation to all disciples. Involvement in the affairs of this world will always lead one to being distracted from the fact that Jesus is coming again.

Unexpected Coming

24:43,44 In this context Jesus gave “generic signs” from which the disciples could deduct the end of national Israel and fall of Jerusalem. No specific details were given. No names were stated. No calendars were distributed to the disciples. He gave just enough information to generate “watching” on the part of those who accepted what He said. Those who believed would need no more information. After the establishment of the church in A.D. 30, the apostles evidently stayed in Jerusalem for as long as fifteen years. The reason for this was obvious. Jerusalem was where devout Jews came to offer sacrifices at the altar every year at the Pass-over/Pentecost feast. It was the prime opportunity to evangelize the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In A.D. 58 or 59 Paul made a last trip there in order to make a final plea to Jews who might obey the gospel (At 21). Their vehement rejection of the gospel, and attempted murder of Paul, was evidence that at this time (A.D. 58,59), the Jerusalem Jews were ripe for the judgment of God. What Jesus had pronounced in 23:34-36 was ready to happen, and would happen only a few years after Paul’s Acts 21 visit. The “righteous blood” of all the innocent prophets of God was about to be brought on his generation of defiant Jews. ***You also be ready:*** In Jesus’ pronouncements of this chapter He wanted to give the faithful adequate indications of when to stay away from Jerusalem and Judea. They must not become caught up in the nationalistic frenzy of the times. It would be best that they sell “their possessions and goods” and be ready to flee the city (At 2:45; see At 4:32-37). Residents of Jerusalem were going to lose their possessions anyway in the coming destruction.

The Faithful And Wise Servant

24:45-47 *Faithful and wise servant:* The faithful and wise servant understands the responsibility of his relationship to the master’s household. So it was with those disciples who remained faithful and wisely understood their duties to serve the Lord. They would not be diverted to the cares of this world, nor drawn away by the politics of nationalistic Israelites. Their citizenship in heaven would be stronger than their connection to the physical “seed of Abraham.” Spiritual loyalty to Jesus would rise above nationalistic pride. Therefore, they would take heed and watch for the coming of the master of the household. In the historical context of the prophecy of Matthew 24, the disciples would take heed to their Master’s prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem.

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The Evil Servant

24:48-51 *Evil bondservant:* The evil servant will not be spiritually awakened by the imminent coming of the Lord in his lifetime. He puts the thought out of his mind and carries on with the ordinary things of life. In Jesus' personal conversation here with His disciples He was emphasizing the fact that this coming of the Lord would happen "in this generation" (See 16:28; 23:36). Jesus was not leading them to believe that the final coming and end of the world would be in their lifetime. The New Testament does not teach the imminent final return of Jesus. That is, the Holy Spirit did not inspire the New Testament writers to believe that the final coming of Jesus would happen in the lifetime of the 1st century disciples. However, Jesus and the inspired writers did teach the imminent coming of Jesus in time in judgment upon Jerusalem (See Js 5:7,8). Therefore, Jesus urged His disciples to look for this coming. Those who would not heed these warnings of Matthew 24 would suffer the weeping and gnashing of teeth in the destruction of their prized city. They would realize after it was too late and that they lost out on an opportunity to believe on Jesus.

Chapter 25

PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

There have been differences of opinion among Bible students concerning the specific application of the parables of this chapter. It is difficult to determine whether Jesus has turned in the context from the destruction of national Israel to His final coming or if He is continuing the discussion of chapter 24. Both events are major teachings in reference to God's work. Both involve a great separation of the righteous from the unrighteous. Both manifest the separation from good and evil. However, if we stay with the context of the subject of chapter 24, Jesus would be continuing His discussion concerning the coming in judgment on national Israel into the context of chapter 25. The following three parables would thus illustrate what would be taking place throughout the 40 years of preaching between the establishment of the church in A.D. 30 and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

25:1-13 *Then:* The Greek word here is *tote* and can be translated "at that time." Therefore, emphasis could be on Jesus' continuation of the subject of chapter 24. In other words, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem the righteous (the church) will be delivered from the destruction. Nevertheless, the three parables of this chapter speak of the redemption of the church in general. Though emphasis in the context would be on the termination of national Israel, the deliverance of the righteous from the judgment of destruction would be metaphorically applicable to the redemption of the church out of the world at the end of time. ***Kingdom of heaven:*** In this context, Jesus speaks of the effect of the reign of Deity from heaven and its impact on the hearts of men who respond to the call of God (Lk 17:20,21). ***Ten virgins:*** Those who have responded to the kingdom reign of God. ***Went out to meet the bridegroom:*** Jesus is the bridegroom of the righteous (See 9:15; Ep 5:29,30; Rv 19:7; 21:2,9). ***Five***

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of them were wise: When considering the eternal consequences that are involved in what happens in reference to God's work among men, it is certainly wise to respond to God in our lives (7:24; 10:16; 24:45). The consequences of being unprepared for the bridegroom will manifest the foolishness of the unrighteous. **While the bridegroom tarried:** The Father delayed the coming of Jesus in judgment until He had accomplished all His work among men. In the context of the termination of national Israel, the judgment on Jerusalem was delayed until the fullness of the Gentiles had come in (See comments Rm 11). **They all slumbered and slept:** Believers who become indifferent to the work of God, will become entangled in the affairs of this life to the point of losing sight of their original purpose as sons of God. They thus become spiritually dead (See Rm 13:11; 1 Th 5:6). One must be prepared with spiritual oil for the coming of the bridegroom. **At midnight ... a cry was made:** The announcement came suddenly and without warning. The parable here does not seem to have application to the end of time and coming of Jesus, but to His coming in time, for a cry went out. At the end of time, the coming of the Lord will occur suddenly and without any duration of time for the "cry" (1 Co 15:51,52; 1 Th 4:16). Here the indication seems to be on a "cry" that extends over a period of time. Such happened in the time before the destruction of Jerusalem. After the establishment of the church in Acts 2, the disciples went forth and preached everywhere (Mk 16:20; At 8:4). Their cry was that the coming of the Lord in judgment on Israel was at hand. It was soon to happen (Js 5:7,8). **Trimmed their lamps:** They prepared their lamps for the bridegroom (See 5:16; Lk 12:35). **Those who were ready went in with him:** Jesus teaches that negligence or idleness on the part of any will result in their not being delivered at the time of judgment. Those Jews who were indifferent to Jesus in the 1st century suffered the judgment of the destruction of national Israel. At the end of time, the same will occur. Those who slumber in relation to being prepared in spiritual things will also be shut out of the new heavens and earth. **Lord, Lord, open to us:** Once God's judgment has begun, there is no hope for those who have not prepared themselves. Such was the case in the destruction of Jerusalem. Once Rome unleashed her fury against national Israel, it was too late for Israel to change course. **I do not know you:** God does not claim the unrighteous (See Hk 1:13). However, He does know the righteous (Gl 4:9). **Watch:** Reference is to being prepared, not to watching out for "signs of the times," for no one knows the hour or day in which God will rain down His judgments (See 24:36,42; Mk 13:35).

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

25:14,15 Compare Lk 19:11-28. **Man traveling to a far country:** Jesus left this earth after the conclusion of His ministry and ascended to the right hand of God (Dn 7:13,14; Jn 14:1-3; At 1:8-11; Ep 2:20-22; Hb 9:23-28). **His own bondservants:** Jesus called those He claimed, for they had identified themselves by their submission to His will in order to be His servants (See 21:33). **He gave ... talents:** Compare 18:24; Lk 19:13.

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One talent was worth about 6,000 denarii. In this context, Jesus uses this monetary unit to refer to the abilities, or opportunities, that one has that he can use to the glory of God. To every man God has given ability and opportunity and the responsibility that those abilities should be used to take advantage of opportunities for the glory of God (See Rm 12:6; Ep 4:11). In the context of Jesus' audience, specific reference would be to those religious leaders who had been given the responsibility to spiritually lead Israel in order to produce fruit in the vineyard for God (See comments 21:23-44). Jesus indicates that responsibility was given in variation. The talents were given according to the capability of the individual to perform in its use. Thus God expects the receivers of the abilities to exercise use of what they can do, not what they cannot do. What is important is that God expects one to give himself in His service according to what he can do.

25:16 *And made another five talents:* God expected that everyone be held accountable for the talents that were delivered to them. In other words, inactivity in the kingdom is not accepted. When the kingdom reign of Jesus is in the hearts of those who have accepted Him as their king (6:9,20; Lk 17:20,21), then they are moved into action for the king (See 2 Co 4:15; 1 Jn 4:19). Inactivity is thus evidence that the king is not reigning in the hearts of men.

25:17-19 When one accepts the responsibility of servanthood as a subject of the kingdom, then he must respond to the wishes of the king (See comments 1 Co 15:10). Even those who are "one talent" servants must do what they can for the king. Emphasis is not on how much one does, for the amount one accomplishes is determined by his personal gifts from God. Emphasis here is on doing (See comments Gl 5:6; Ep 2:10; 1 Th 1:3; Js 2:14-26).

25:20-23 *I have gained ... more talents:* The five-talent and two-talent servants were commended on the basis of their faithfulness and stewardship to carry out in their lives the will of the king (See vs 34,36; 24:47; Lk 12:44). If one determines to serve God, then God will give the increase, for it is God's grace that works in our hearts to bring forth fruit to God (See comments 1 Co 15:10; Ph 2:12,13). ***Well done, good and faithful bond-servant:*** What greater words could ever be heard from God? Christians should be motivated to work for God in order to hear these words from God. It is not that one works in order to earn his salvation. It is that one works in response to the grace of God (See comments 1 Co 15:10; Gl 5:6; Ep 2:10).

25:24 The excuses of the one-talent servant actually insult the integrity of the master. It manifests the fact that he did not really know the master, and thus, did not know what the master expected. He was rejected on this basis. His inactivity manifested his lack of concern and response to the will of the master. The will of the master is not burdensome to the one who responds to the love and grace of a loving Father (2 Co 4:15; 1 Jn 4:19; 5:3).

25:25-27 The sin of the one-talent servant resulted from his ungrateful response to the master who had given him so much (See Rm 12:11; 1 Th 5:6; see comments 2 Co 4:15).

25:28-30 *Take the talent from him:* The neglected use of one's gift

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will result in losing everything he has been given. If one refuses to respond to God's grace, he cannot expect to receive anything as a result of his lazy ingratitude. **More will be given:** In the final end of all things, the glories that will be given to the Christian will far outweigh that which he has accomplished on earth (See comments Rm 8:18). He will receive more than what he can earn by works on this earth. It will be by God's grace that we will receive a reward that is far greater than what we may have supposed to earn. **Unprofitable bondservant:** In reference to the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day, they were unprofitable because they did not respond to God's grace by focusing their work on God. They concentrated on themselves by creating a religion after their own traditions (See 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-19; comments Gl 1:13,14). Men have done the same throughout history. Even to this day religious leaders have misguided those to whom talents have been given. The world is filled with those who have buried their talents in the deceptions of indifferent religiosity.

JUDGMENT

25:31 When the Son of Man comes in His glory: Jesus begins here to give a vivid description of the Messiah's coming in all His majesty to execute judgment (2 Th 1:7-9). The picture here is Jesus' coming to sit on His throne in order to execute judgment. Keep in mind that this could also refer to Jesus' coming unto the Father, as prophesied in Daniel 7:13,14, to sit and reign with kingdom authority after His ascension. Jesus spoke earlier of this "coming" (presence) in 19:28. The coming with angels or "holy ones" is judgment language that is also used throughout the Bible (See Zc 14:5; Jl 3:11,12; Is 13:13; Jd 13,14). In fact, Zechariah 14:5 and Joel 3:11,12 are prophecies that refer to the establishment of the church. Therefore, the coming of Jesus with His holy ones here should not be interpreted to refer exclusively to the final coming of Jesus at the end of time.

Angels: Compare Zc 14:5; Jl 3:11,12; Ps 103:20; Is 13:3; Jd 14,15.

25:32 He will separate them one from another: God will judge the world at the end of time through Jesus (See Ez 20:38; Jn 12:48; At 17:31; 2 Co 5:10). However, when the church was established in Acts 2, there was also a judgment. One judged himself in reference by his acceptance or rejection of the gospel (See comments Jn 12:48; At 13:46).

25:33 Separation between the righteous and the wicked occurred when the gospel was preached. There will also be a final separation at the end of time (vss 4-11; Jn 5:28,29). One's response to the gospel in time will determine his destiny at the end of time.

25:34 The kingdom prepared for you: The purpose for which God created the world was to bring obedient people into heavenly dwelling. In order to do this, those who would go into eternal dwelling must first submit to the kingdom reign of Jesus that was conceived in the mind of God before the creation of the world. Therefore, when men respond to the kingdom reign of Jesus, they are the church of God on earth that is in preparation for the new heavens and earth that is yet to come (Compare Lk 12:32; 1 Co 2:7; 6:9; 15:50; Gl 5:21; Js 2:5). In the new heavens and

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earth, Christians will realize their hopes in a place of rest in the arms of God (Rv 14:13), which is a place of joy (Lk 15:7,10), righteousness (2 Pt 3:13), reward (5:11,12), inheritance (25:34; Gl 3:26-29; Cl 1:12; 1 Pt 1:4), glory (Rm 8:18; Cl 3:4), no physical death or pain (Rv 21:4), immortality (1 Co 15:42,50), no wickedness (1 Pt 1:4), no sorrow (Rv 7:17), and eternal worship (Rv 4:10,11; 7:15; 15:2,3). Those who will inherit heaven are the saved (Jn 3:5,18,21), righteous (13:43; 25:34,37), persevering (Rv 2:10), obedient (7:21; Jn 5:29), humble in spirit (5:3), persecuted (5:11,12), and those who have been enrolled by their obedience to the gospel (Lk 10:20; Hb 12:23). They are the ones who have their names in the Lamb's book of life (Rv 20:15). It is to these that God will give a place of eternal dwelling (25:46; Mk 10:29,30) which is a city for the righteous (Hb 13:14). One's enrollment in the new Jerusalem on earth will be his qualification for enrollment in heaven to come (See comments Rv 21:20-27).

25:35-39 Jesus here lists six physical conditions of life that represent all aspects of our human service to one another. These are services the righteous render to others because God has extended mercy and grace to them. Therefore, humble service to the needs of our fellow man is the manifestation of our inward gratitude for the grace of God (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15; Gl 5:6; 6:9,10; Ep 2:10).

25:40 My brothers: These would be those who have humbly become servants of Jesus. Christians have a special responsibility to one another (Gl 6:10). **You have done it to Me:** These humble servants had shown true obedient faith that had worked through their love of others (Gl 5:6; Js 2:14). They loved because the King had first loved them (1 Jn 4:19; compare Pv 19:17; Hb 6:10; 1 Jn 2:7-11; 3:13-23).

25:41 Depart from Me, you cursed: These would be the worst words one could ever hear (7:23). The King will show no mercy to those who have shown no mercy in service to His disciples (18:21-35; Js 2:13). **Into the everlasting fire:** Here is the fire that consumes Satan, his angels and all the wicked. The word *aionios* (everlasting) is used here after a common meaning that makes the fire sure and certain with effects that are unending. It will consume the wicked, and the results of the consumption will never be changed. The destruction of soul and body will be complete after severe punishment has been dealt to the wicked (See comments 10:28; 2 Th 1:9; see 5:22,29,30; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mk 9:43-47; Lk 12:5; Js 3:6). This is the gehenna of final punishment (vs 46), destruction (10:28; 2 Th 1:8,9), consuming fire (Rv 14:10; 19:20; 20:10,14,15; 21:8), torment (Rv 14:11), damnation (23:33; Jn 5:29), outer darkness (8:12; 25:30; Jd 13), and unquenchable fire (3:12; Mk 9:47) that is reserved for all those who reject the gospel. **Prepared for the devil and his angels:** The torment and destruction of hell (gehenna) is specifically prepared for the devil and his angels. It is also prepared for those who behave in their lives after the desires of Satan. These are those who do not obey the gospel (2 Th 1:7-9), and thus, remain in their wickedness (7:21-23; Rv 21:8), ungodliness (1 Pt 4:17,18) and disobedience (Rm 2:8,9). It is also for apostate Christians (vss 14-30; 22:18; 2 Pt 2:20-22).

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25:42-45 One's eternal destiny in heaven is determined by his relationship with his fellow Christian (See vs 34-40; compare 1 Jn 2:7-11; 3:13-23). One is destined to hell if he does not have a benevolent relationship with his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ (See Gl 6:10). If one does not respond to the love by which God loved him, then he is condemned because of what he did not do to show his thanksgiving to God (Js 4:17; see comments 2 Co 4:15). Salvation, therefore, is based on one's deeds in the sense that deeds manifest our appreciation to God for His saving grace (See comments 1 Co 15:10). We are not meritoriously saved by works, but works must manifest our faith (See comments Js 2:14-26).

25:46 *Eternal punishment:* Both the righteous and unrighteous will be raised at the end of time (Jn 5:28,29; At 24:15). Before the unrighteous is the certainty of a punishment that will be according to their deeds (See comments Lk 12:41-48). The unrighteous will be raised to suffer just punishment. ***Eternal life:*** The Greek work here is *aiionios*. Reference is to life that is at one time granted to those who come into the presence of God, and thus, continue without end as a result of continuing in the presence of God. The eternal life of the Christian is certain and sure because of the grace of God that was poured out through the cross of Jesus. Those who are cast from the presence of God will not have life. They will suffer the destruction of soul and body (See comments 10:28; 2 Th 1:8,9). The consequence of their destruction will not be permanent. Since eternity is only in the presence of the eternal God, then those outside His presence cannot enjoy eternal existence.

Death, Resurrection & Commission Of The Christ

(26:1 – 28:20)

Outline: (1) Plot to murder Jesus (26:1-5), (2) Feast in Simon's house (26:6-13), (3) The end begins (26:14-16), (4) Passover meal with the disciples (26:17-19), (5) Refocusing the Passover meal (26:31-46), (7) Betrayal and arrest (26:47-56), (8) The trials (26:57-75), (9) Morning after the arrest (27:1-26), (10) The crucifixion (27:27-44), (11) The death (27:45-56), (12) The burial (27:57-66), (13) The resurrection (28:1-8), (14) The appearances (28:9,10), (15) The cover up (28:11-15), (16) The commission (28:16-20)

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PLOT TO MURDER JESUS

(Mk 14:1,2; Lk 22:1,2)

26:1 *Finished all these sayings:* Jesus has concluded the discourses of chapters 24 and 25. He now begins in His instructions to prepare the disciples for the traumatic events that are about to happen in their lives concerning His trial and crucifixion.

26:2 *Passover:* This is also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lk 22:1). Two days after the discourses of chapters 24 and 25, the greatest Jewish feast of the year began (See Ex 12; Nm 28:16-25; Jn 11:55; 13:1). Thousands of Jews who came from all over the Roman Empire were pres-

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ent in Jerusalem for this feast (See At 2:9,10).

26:3-5 Chief priests: These were the priests who served according to appointment in the temple work. All of these priests were to be present for the Passover (Jn 11:47). Joseph Caiaphas, who had been appointed by Valerius Gratus, was at this time the high priest. **Plotted to take Jesus:** All public arguments had failed to discredit Jesus before the multitudes. Therefore, the frustrated Jewish religious leadership deceived themselves into believing that they could justifiably commit murder in the name of religion. However, God was allowing Satan to work through them in order to turn Satan's work into accomplishing what God had planned before the creation of the world (Jn 10:18; At 2:23; 4:25-28). If Satan had known what was about to happen on the cross, surely he would have deterred the plan to have Jesus crucified. **Secretly:** Under Roman law the Jews did not have the official right to kill Jesus without the consent of the Roman governor, who was at this time Pilate. Therefore, it is evident that at this time the Jews were planning a murder plot against Jesus. **Not during the feast:** A public murder of Jesus would have caused a riot among the people, for they accepted Jesus as a prophet (21:46). However, God would not allow Jesus to be secretly murdered on some dark street of Jerusalem. The crucifixion had to be public, and thus, manifested before the entire world.

FEAST IN SIMON'S HOUSE

(Mk 14:3-9; Jn 12:2-8)

26:6,7 Jesus was in Bethany: Matthew places an event here that actually occurred three days before. His reason for doing this was to give further explanation to his readers concerning the events that led up to the betrayal of Jesus. **Simon:** Simon was a leper who had earlier been healed by Jesus. Some believe that this may have been the father of Lazarus who was raised from the dead (See Jn 12:1-8). **A woman:** This was Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha (Jn 12:2,3). **Alabaster vial of very precious ointment:** This was a marble or gypsum vessel that was used to contain precious ointments. The fragrant oil was spikenard that is often simply called "nard." It was extracted from the dried root and stems of the spikenard plant. It was a very costly perfume that was worth three hundred denarii (Jn 12:5). **Poured it on His head:** At least Mary knew that something significant was about to happen. Her gesture here manifested her deep respect and acceptance of Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. She gave that which was her best in order to show her worship of Jesus.

26:8,9 They were indignant: Judas Iscariot (Jn 12:4) was the leader of this group of disciples that judged the actions of Mary to be a waste of precious ointment. He and others seem to have been more concerned with the value of material things than the significance of what was about to happen. John records that Judas cared not for the poor, but was a thief (Jn 12:4-6).

26:10-13 She has done a good deed to Me: When it came to honoring Jesus, Mary did not consider the cost of the ointment. She was

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more concerned about expressing her appreciation for Jesus. When one realizes the love of God that was manifested through Jesus (Jn 3:16), no material thing on earth is too great to be sacrificed for God. **Have the poor always with you:** There will always be the poor, and thus, the people will always have opportunity to be benevolent to the poor (See Dt 15:11; Mk 14:7; Jn 12:8; Gl 2:10). However, the Bridegroom would not always be in the physical presence of the disciples. The occasion, therefore, justified the use of the precious ointment. **She did it for My burial:** The twelve had been with Jesus for over three and a half years. And yet, this woman, Mary, seems to understand the seriousness of the moment more than the disciples. In these very last hours of Jesus' earthly ministry, the disciples were distracted by their rivalry among themselves as to who was the greatest (See comments Mk 10:35-45; Lk 22:24; Jn 13). While men concentrate on facts and figures, it is often necessary for godly women to bring into the moment of the hour the emotion with which we must sense the seriousness of matters. **Told in memory of her:** The humble act of servitude that Mary performed would become the memorial of her love for Jesus (Compare Hb 11:4). Her correct spiritual priorities to exalt one's love of Jesus above any physical thing of this world, or competition for power, would be an example to Christians throughout the history of the world.

THE END BEGINS

(Mk 14:10,11; Lk 22:3-6)

26:14-16 Judas Iscariot went to the chief priest: The rebuke of the preceding incident concerning Mary and the precious ointment was evidently enough to send Judas off to carry into action his misguided motives. His heart was fertile soil for Satan to carry out his desire to betray Jesus (See Lk 22:3; 1 Co 5:8). **What will you give me:** Judas initiates the betrayal scheme, and thus, must be held accountable for the consequences. It is difficult to determine his true motives. He was greedy (Jn 12:6), but he surely had other motives that led him to this betrayal scheme. Possibly, he was seeking to force the situation that Jesus be made a king here on earth over a physical kingdom, for such thinking was in the minds of all the disciples (See At 1:6). **Thirty pieces of silver:** This was the price of a common slave (Ex 21:32). The priests knew the statement of Zechariah 11:12,13. However, their anger toward Jesus clouded any objectivity they had in applying prophecy to what they were actually doing. **He sought opportunity to betray Him:** The multitudes were constantly in Jesus' presence. Therefore, because he was possibly ashamed of the deed he was about to do, Judas sought for a time when he could secretly betray Jesus before the priests. However, such was not in the plan of God because the injustices against Jesus would be made known before the world.

PASSOVER MEAL WITH THE DISCIPLES

(Mk 14:12-17; Lk 22:7-13)

26:17 First day of the Unleavened Bread: This was the thirteenth of Nisan, Thursday, the day before the preparation for the Passover. Com-

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bined with the Passover, the feast of Unleavened Bread lasted eight days (Ex 12:18-20). **Prepare for You to eat the Passover:** The disciples suggested that they prepare for the Passover by finding a place to have the meal together (Lk 22:15).

26:18,19 My time is at hand: Jesus said that the time of the cross was at hand (Lk 9:51). However, His disciples did not know what He meant by saying that His time was at hand. **Keep the Passover:** Jesus possibly ate a meal with the disciples in preparation for the Passover. This meal was eaten before the actual Passover meal was eaten. No indication is given here that they ate a prepared lamb, the eating of which was customary at the meal of the Passover. Jesus was the Passover Lamb on this particular Passover (See comments Lk 22:7-13). At the time the Passover lamb was eaten, Jesus would be on the cross as the sacrificial Passover lamb for all men. Therefore, in this context, Jesus would be using the term "Passover" to refer to all that He would do in fellowship with His disciples during these last hours with them. However, in the minds of the disciples, they are going to eat the traditional Jewish Passover meal.

REFOCUSING THE PASSOVER

(Mk 14:18-21; Lk 22:21-23; Jn 13:30)

26:20-22 See comments Jn 13:1-20. **Evening:** In the context of the Passover meal, Jesus sought to change the emphasis of the Passover meal to an event where He would be the focus of the meal. This occasion took place in the evening and with the twelve apostles. Judas was still present with the group at this time. **Eating:** The disciples and Jesus were reclining on the floor (Jn 13:13,23) and eating a full meal (Jn 13:2). During this meal, He added His memorial that had more significance than the normal Passover meal that the Jews ate (See Ex 12:11). **Betray Me:** The proceedings of the meal were interrupted by a disturbing announcement by Jesus. **They were exceedingly sorrowful:** The announcement that one of them would betray Him astonished the disciples. The meal and occasion were a time of joy in remembering the Jewish deliverance from Egyptian captivity. It was a meal of celebration. But here Jesus begins to prepare them for the events that were about to happen. See comments 1 Co 11:23-29. **Lord, is it I:** They understood that the betrayal would come from within their group, though they did not understand exactly what Jesus was saying concerning a betrayal. Such would be the fulfillment of prophecy (Ps 41:9).

26:23,24 Dipped his hand with Me: It was a custom of the East to set bowls of food before guests. One would dip his hand into these bowls in order to take food for eating. By dipping his hand with Jesus into one of these specified bowls, Judas was identified as the betrayer (Jn 13:26). **As it is written:** It was foreknown, and thus prophesied that Jesus would suffer the death of the cross (Is 53; Ps 22; At 2:23). **Woe:** See Lk 17:1. **If he had not been born:** Reference is to his personal life (Jn 17:12). It is not to the fact that Judas was the one by whom betrayal would lead to the cross, which event was good news for the salvation of mankind.

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26:25 Teacher: The other disciples had addressed Jesus as Lord (vs 22). But Judas simply addressed Jesus as "Teacher." He had not yet understood that Jesus was greater than a teacher of Israel. Such is the case with many throughout the world. Jesus was more than a teacher. He was the Son of God (See comments Jn 20:30,31). **You have said it:** Judas may have been shocked to know that Jesus realized the intentions of his heart (See Jn 13:31-38).

26:26 See Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:19,20; 1 Co 11:23-26. **Bread:** Because unleavened bread was eaten at the Passover, this particular bread was probably the bread from which the disciples ate on this occasion. At the time of the Passover, all leavened bread was to be cast out of the Jewish houses. In Luke's account, Jesus first took of the cup, then the bread, and finally the cup again (Lk 22:17,19,20). To the Jews, bread at the Passover meant more than something to eat. When Israel came out of Egyptian captivity, they depended on the manna that came down out of heaven in order to live (Ex 16:31-35). They lived because God provided bread for them. From their days in Egypt, they learned from the Egyptians that bread meant life. Bread came from the grain that came from the Nile River, whose waters came from rain that came from heaven. To the Egyptians, bread meant life that came from the gods of heaven. Jesus said that He was the Bread of Life that came down out of heaven (Jn 6:48). When Jesus took the bread at the Passover with the disciples, therefore, they understood that the bread meant life. When Paul said that the one bread was the body of Christ, he referred to the body of believers, not the physical body of Jesus (1 Co 10:16,17). Those who were in the spiritual body, the church, had life because they partook of the life that came from the Bread of Life. **Blessed:** He gave thanks to the Father as He also did for the cup (vs 27). What Jesus was using was simple unleavened bread, which bread He did not turn into something different than bread. No miracle was here worked. He was using something of this world to signify something that is above this world. **This is My body:** He did not mean that it was His actual body, for He was standing in their presence in His literal body. As in John 10:7, this metaphorical statement was used in order to establish the bread as a memorial of the incarnate body of Jesus that was nailed to the cross. Paul later revealed that Jesus also signified in the bread His spiritual body, the church (1 Co 10:16,17). The phrase "breaking of bread" was later used by Luke to refer to the meal, during which the early disciples partook of these memorials (See comments At 20:7; 1 Co 10:16-18).

26:27 He took the cup: The figure of speech Jesus uses here is a metonymy. In other words, the physical cup was used to refer to something else than the cup. That to which reference was made was the contents of the cup. And the content of the cup, the "fruit of the vine" (Mk 14:25), was established as a memorial of Jesus' sacrificial blood. The phrase "fruit of the vine" was used as a statement to define the content of the cup. **All of you drink of it:** The emphasis of the Greek text is not on drinking all the contents, but that all of them who were present to drink of it (See Mk

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14:23). All of them, not just one, were to partake of both the bread and cup. Such was the case with the Lord's Supper in the early church. All those who assembled, not just one person, partook of the Supper together (At 20:7).

26:28 My blood of the covenant: A biblical concept is that the blood represents the life of the living (Gn 9:4; Lv 7:26,27; At 15:20). Therefore, Jesus here says that His life was to be offered for all men (Jn 6:54-56; Cl 1:20; Hb 9:12,14,20; 1 Pt 1:2; 1 Jn 1:7). As the Old Testament covenant with Israel was sealed with the blood of animals (Ex 24:8), so the New Testament covenant that Jesus established with all those who obeyed the gospel by baptism for remission of sins is likewise sealed with the blood of Jesus. Christians are in a covenant relationship with Jesus. When they partake of the Lord's meal they rejoice over this covenant relationship. Their meal that they eat, during which they partake of the cup and bread, is a covenant meal. **For the remission of sins:** Jesus' blood was poured out in order that men might have remission of sins. It was not poured out because they had already received remission of sins. The same Greek word Jesus uses here ("for" - *eis*) is also used in Acts 2:38 where it refers to one being baptized "for" remission of sins (See 28:19). At baptism one contacts the saving blood of Jesus, and thus, receives remission of sins through the blood of Jesus (See comments Rm 6:3-6; Ep 1:3).

26:29 In My Father's kingdom: At the time of this occasion, the Father was reigning as King and head over all things (1 Ch 29:11,12). The Father, however, would give all authority as king and head to the Son (28:18; Jn 13:3; 17:2; Ep 1:20-22). After the ascension, Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father to exercise kingdom reign that had been given to Him from the Father (See comments Dn 2:44; 7:13,14). Jesus attributes such reign to the Father since the Father was reigning at the time of the institution of the Supper and would be the source from which He would receive kingdom reign at the ascension. Jesus looked to the future in reference to eating the Passover meal with the disciples. He is now reigning over all things, but will return kingdom reign to the Father when He comes again (See 1 Co 15:26-28). We would assume, therefore, that Jesus' eating with His disciples again would refer to the time when we are invited to eat a meal of celebration with Him when He comes again (See Rv 19:7-9).

26:30 Jesus spoke many things to the disciples during the last hours of His ministry and the occasion of the Supper (See Jn 14-16). After these events wherein Jesus manifested His faith in the Father, they sang a customary song and went to the Mount of Olives where the betrayal would take place and the trials would begin.

PRAYER IN GETHSEMANE

(Mk 14:32-42; Lk 22:39-46; Jn 18:1)

26:31-35 You will fall away ... because of Me: Because of their fear, the disciples would be afraid to be associated with Jesus on this night of the betrayal and trial (See Jn 16:32). **Strike the Shepherd:** The prophecy

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of Zechariah 13:7 says that God would strike the Shepherd. In fulfillment of this prophecy, Jesus went to the cross because of the plan and work of God (See Gn 49:24; Ps 23:1; Is 40:11; 53:7; Rv 13:8). **After I have been raised:** The disciples had witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus. Such was proof that what Jesus spoke here could happen, though the disciples still did not understand the crucifixion and resurrection because Jesus had done nothing worthy of the Roman death penalty of the cross. **Before you to Galilee:** See 28:7-10; Mk 14:28. Galilee was the central place of the ministry of Jesus, and thus, a special place far away from the turmoil of Jerusalem where He would be able to be with the disciples (28:7,16; Mk 16:7). **I will never fall away:** The impetuous Peter contradicted the Lord's prophecy. Peter was too sure of himself, possibly thinking that he was stronger than the others. Nevertheless, he would soon learn that he must stand trust in the power of God and not in his own ability to stand against the onslaught of persecution. **Before the cock crow:** Emphasis is not on a single rooster, but on the numerous roosters of the city that would make the general crow of roosters in the early morning hours (Mk 13:35). Some believe that this was around 3:00am in the morning. **All the disciples:** The other disciples were motivated by the boldness of Peter. Therefore, all gave their pledge that they would never deny Jesus. It is easy to give such pledges when one is not in the heat of trials.

26:36-38 Gethsemane: See Mk 14:32-35. This was the place of the oil presses east of Jerusalem. Jesus had come to this place for prayer on many other occasions (Lk 22:39; Jn 18:2). For this reason, Judas knew exactly where to find Jesus in order to commit the betrayal act. In the garden, Jesus left the eight other disciples in order to take Peter, James and John to another secluded place in the garden in order to pray (See 4:21; 17:1). **Sorrowful:** Matthew records the emotional appearance of Jesus (See Jn 12:27; Hb 5:7). Jesus knew the impending pain of the cross that He was soon to experience. However, what was greater than the pain of the cross, was the sins of the world He was about to bear. **Watch with Me:** Jesus knew that the mob would soon arrive under the leadership of Judas. He thus asked Peter, James and John to stand guard while He, in great sorrow, poured out His soul in prayer to the Father without the concern of others invading His privacy.

26:39 O My Father: His compassionate address to the Father in prayer (6:9) reveals the relationship between the Father and Son while the Son was in a state of incarnation on earth. In this state, Jesus addressed the Father as "My" Father. Thus God the Father was the unique Father of the Son because the Son was the only begotten of the Father (Jn 3:16). **Let this cup pass from Me:** Jesus had accepted the eternal responsibility of incarnation and death on behalf of the sins of mankind (20:22). He willingly submitted to the cross. He knew that His destiny could not pass from Him, because as the manifested Son of the Godhead, His incarnational sacrifice had to be completed in death. **Not as I will, but as You will:** See Lk 22:42; Jn 6:38. Though the human side of Jesus was very sorrowful, the divine side knew that the plan of God that was

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foreordained before the world was created, must be carried out. On this occasion, therefore, the human side of incarnate Deity relinquishes to the divine side in order that the sacrifice for sin be accomplished (Hb 5:7). Therefore, the Son becomes obedient unto death (Ph 2:8; Hb 5:8).

26:40,41 Found them asleep: Because of their own sorrow, the disciples slept for relief from their own anxiety (Lk 22:45,46). This common psychological relief from anxiety brought them relief during the great period of time Jesus spent in prayer and the time the angels came and comforted Him (Lk 22:43). Because they slept, they missed out on observing the ministry of angels to Jesus. **Watch and pray:** No greater advice could be given to those who find themselves in precarious situations. **Flesh is weak:** One may not desire to fall into temptation, but we must never underestimate the power of the lust of the flesh to lead one astray into sin (Gl 5:17; Js 1:13,14).

26:42-44 Your will be done: The cup would not pass. Jesus had to drink of it for all mankind (Mk 10:38,39). Jesus was willing to drink of the cup of suffering for the sins of all humanity (See Is 50:5). Luke records that Jesus' sweat on this occasion became "as" great drops of blood (Lk 22:44). Therefore, the sweat was not literal blood, but the sweat fell from His face as if it were blood. The intensity of Jesus' prayer affirms that He knew the certainty of what was about to happen. Jesus' foreknowledge of the future was here exemplified in the fact that with great anxiety He had great sorrow over what He knew for certain would happen.

26:45,46 The hour is at hand: That hour for which the sins of all humanity have waited was now at hand. This was the time of the betrayal, the trial and crucifixion of the Son of God (Jn 2:4; 12:33). It was the final hour for which all humanity had been waiting since the promise that the seed of woman would crush the head of Satan (Gn 3:15). **The Son of Man is being betrayed:** Judas was in the process of leading to Jesus the religious leaders with their soldiers (See vs 21; 20:18).

BETRAYAL AND ARREST

(Mk 14:43-52; Lk 22:47-53; Jn 18:2-12)

26:47-50 A great multitude with swords and clubs: The parallel records state that Judas was leading a band of officers, soldiers, Pharisees, chief priests, scribes and elders who came with lanterns, torches, swords and clubs. They came in such a manner because they believed there would be trouble, for people accepted Jesus as a prophet. Among the disciples there were also those who believed that Jesus was to be a king on this earth. **Kissed Him:** The kiss was a customary form of affectionate greeting among the Jews (See 2 Sm 20:9). Judas used such to identify Jesus. John reports that the crowd drew back when Jesus openly and confidently yielded to their requests (Jn 18:6). **Friend:** The Greek word here means "companion" (See 20:13; 22:12; see Ps 41:9; 55:13). Judas' work of betrayal was coming from himself who was a close companion of Jesus throughout the ministry of Jesus.

26:51,52 One of those who were with Jesus: It was impetuous

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Peter who drew a sword and struck in order to inflict a mortal wound in defense of Jesus (Jn 18:10). However, Malchus dodged the sword except for his ear (Jn 18:10,26). **Perish by the sword:** It was never the intentions of Jesus to use physical force to promote His kingdom reign (See Jn 18:36; Rv 13:10). Those who would twist the work of the kingdom in order to use such physical violence have proved that they do not understand the nature of the kingdom nor the work of Jesus. This fact distinguished the kingdom reign of Jesus, and the response of Christians, from the many religions of the world that use violence to promote their misguided views and false religious beliefs. **The sword:** This sword was in the possession of the disciples for defense against a murder plot. They did not possess the sword for offensive reasons (Lk 12:38).

26:53,54 Twelve legions of angels: This would be about 36,000 angels. It was presumptuous of Peter to think that Jesus needed any human help by swords and clubs to defend Himself from the mere efforts of man. Peter, as well as all of us, must understand that Jesus was of His own will giving Himself into the hands of those who would take Him to the cross (See Jn 10:17,18). **How then will the Scripture be fulfilled:** See Is 50:6; 53:2-11. Emphasis here is not only on the fact that Jesus must die on the cross, but that all these things must happen in order to fulfill prophecy (See 18:7; Jn 10:35; 1 Co 15:3,4).

26:55,56 I sat daily ... teaching in the temple: Jesus' work was to teach. He did such in Jerusalem in the temple every day (See Mk 12:35; 14:49; Lk 4:20; 9:23; 19:47; Jn 7:14,28; 18:20). At the time of His teaching in the temple, His enemies could have taken Him at any time. But in coming to Him outside Jerusalem, and in the middle of the night, they manifested their cowardice, for they feared the multitudes (21:46). **The disciples forsook Him:** Peter and John remained as close as possible to Jesus throughout the turmoil of the trial (See Jn 18:15). We do not know where the other disciples fled. Matthew here records that as one of the disciples, he also fled. This confession of cowardice in a moment in his life is surely evidence of the inspiration of this book, for no uninspired writer would have recorded such.

THE TRIALS

(Mk 14:53-65; Lk 22:54,63-65; Jn 18:24)

26:57,58 Led Him away to Caiaphas: Jesus was taken to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas (Lk 22:54-57; Jn 18:13-17). The first denial of Peter took place at this time (26:69,70; Mk 14:66-68; Lk 22:55-57; Jn 18:17). Jesus was questioned. However, because Annas was not at this time the high priest, Jesus refused to answer him (Jn 18:22-24). He was then taken before Caiaphas, where members of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish authority, were assembled. **Peter followed:** Because of his love of Jesus, Peter followed the procession, but from a distance (Jn 18:15,16).

26:59-61 Sought false testimony against Jesus: When no clear accusations could be found, those who had evil motives against the innocent

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Jesus generated false testimony in order to promote their cause. Jesus had done nothing that would call for the death penalty under Roman law. But here the evil hearts of these religious leaders sought to produce such in order to do away with their greatest obstacle, Jesus (See Ps 35:11). **Destroy the temple:** The religious leaders sought to destroy the character of Jesus because they could find no one who would give a valid witness against Him that would justify His death. They thus incorporated a common practice of those who seek to discredit their enemies. They twisted Jesus' statements in order to make Him appear evil. **Temple:** See 23:35; 27:5; Mk 14:58; Jn 2:19.

26:62,63 Do you answer nothing: Nothing Jesus could have said would have satisfied those who were determined to destroy Him. Evil hearts seek no truth. **I adjure You:** Caiaphas attempted here to submit Jesus to an oath in order to make Him answer (See Lv 5:1).

26:64,65 You have said it: Jesus reaffirms the statement of Caiaphas, that He is the Christ, the Son of God. **Sitting ... coming:** Many in their presence would realize in A.D. 70 by the destruction of Jerusalem, that Jesus had ascended to the position of judgment in fulfillment of Daniel 7:13,14 and Psalm 110:1 (Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2:9-11). They would see His "coming" (presence) in reference to the destruction of the Jewish state as God makes the final swing of the ax in A.D. 70 to cut down national Israel (See comments 3:7-10; 16:27,28; 24:27-30). **Tore His clothes:** In great frustration, the high priest showed his outrage (See 2 Kg 18:37). **Blasphemy:** According to their misunderstandings, Jesus spoke blasphemy by claiming to be the Christ and Son of God (See Jn 10:30-36). The truth was that they were speaking blasphemy by assigning Jesus' works to the devil.

26:66-68 All who were present gave their consent that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy, and thus, had committed a sin worthy of death according to the law of the Sinai law (Lv 24:10-16). However, blasphemy was not punishable by death under Roman law. **Spat ... beat ... struck Him:** Herein is the extent that misguided religious leaders will go in their frustrations with truth that contradicts their established religious traditions. Their actions manifest the lengths to which men will go when they cannot answer truth with reason and understanding. **Prophecy to us:** Mark records that vile men blindfolded Jesus while they mocked and struck Him (Mk 14:65). Nevertheless, on this occasion Jesus suffered alone and kept His silence (Hb 12:1,2).

26:69-75 See Mk 14:54,66-72; Lk 22:54-62; Jn 18:15-18,25-27. There were three trials during which the denials of Peter took place. (1) Jesus was questioned at the house of Annas. (2) Jesus was questioned and mocked before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. (3) Jesus went before the formal court of Pilate. He was also sent before Herod by Pilate, though one might not consider such to be a formal trial (Lk 23:6-12). It is difficult to determine exactly when the denials of Peter took place during the time of the trials. **Before the cock crow:** See comments 26:34. Peter made his three denials, and then the crowing of the roosters in the early morning

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took place. Jesus knew his heart in times of weakness and fear. It is in such times that our character is often revealed.

Chapter 27

MORNING AFTER THE ARREST

(Mk 15:1-15; Lk 23:1-25; Jn 18:28 - 19:16)

27:1,2 See Lk 22:67-71. **Chief priests and elders:** The Sanhedrin now planned how they might, according to the strictness of their law, kill an innocent man, and yet maintain their law. The extent to which people of such religions will go is here manifested in the actions of these religious leaders. Their murder plot had failed, and now they seek to be legal according to their law to do the wicked deed of killing an innocent man. **They led Him away:** Luke indicates that the religious leaders again asked Jesus concerning His claim that He was the Christ, the Son of God. **Pontius Pilate:** See Lk 3:1; 13:1; At 3:13; 4:27. Pilate was the Roman procurator (governor) of Judea from A.D. 26-37 (vs 2).

27:3,4 Felt remorse: Matthew here records that the remorse of Judas took place after the meeting with Pilate. The final condemnation of Jesus took place in Pilate's court. **Thirty pieces of silver:** See 26:15. **I have sinned:** Judas' reason for betraying Jesus must have been for some other purpose than the thirty pieces of silver. His actions here indicate that his original purpose had gone astray in the sense that Jesus was condemned to death. He possibly thought his efforts to identify Jesus were to speed up a supposed earthly kingdom with Jesus as king in Jerusalem (See At 1:6). Whatever the reason, everything went wrong according to his plan, and Jesus is subsequently condemned to death. **What is that to us:** The priests and elders had no sympathy for Judas. They had simply used him to accomplish their evil work to do away with Jesus.

27:5-10 Hanged himself: See At 1:18,19 (Compare Dt 21:22,23). **It is not lawful:** They were in the process of crucifying an innocent person, but at the same time wanted to do things according to law. Such is the hypocrisy of legally oriented religions. **Price of blood:** See 26:15; Zc 11:12. Judas had betrayed the innocent blood of Jesus, but the religious leaders had bought blood with the thirty pieces of silver. **Field of Blood:** The Aramaic name for this field is Akeldama. This was the potter's field (At 1:19), the field where potters evidently acquired clay for making pottery. **Jeremiah:** Reference is to at least the prophecies of both Jeremiah and Zechariah (See Jr 32:6-9; Zc 11:12,13).

27:11 It is as you say: Before Pontius Pilate (Jn 18:28-38), Jesus gave this confession (1 Tm 6:13). Jesus affirmed that He was king (2:2; Jr 23:5; 30:9; Lk 19:38; 23:38). On this occasion the Jews brought in the false charge that Jesus did not pay taxes. They did this in order to make it appear that Jesus violated Roman law (Lk 23:2). The making of false charges against one's opposition is an often used tactic of unrighteous men who will use evil means to accomplish their goals. Therefore, when one slanderously makes untrue statements against those with whom he is arguing, he can know that his heart is not righteous before God.

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27:12-14 He answered nothing: The religious leaders were continually making the accusations against Jesus (Mk 15:8). However, Jesus wisely refused to give them the satisfaction of having such slanderous accusations answered. He knew that slander cannot be answered because it comes from a heart that is not pure before God, and thus does not want to hear the truth. **The governor marveled greatly:** Pilate knew that the accusations of the Jews were false and produced out of jealous motives. He marveled at Jesus' restraint in not answering such accusations, which if true, would result in a condemnation of death.

27:15-19 After the above meeting with Pilate, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas who was in Jerusalem at the time (Lk 23:6-12). Herod attempted to entice Jesus to work a miracle, for he had heard of the great works of Jesus. He also allowed his soldiers to mock and humiliate Jesus before sending Him back to Pilate. **Feast:** This was the Passover feast of the Jews. **Accustomed to releasing ... a prisoner:** It was a custom of the Roman governor to release a Jewish prisoner to the Jews during this feast in order to gain the favor of the Jews. **Barabbas:** See Lk 23:19. **Because of envy they had delivered Him:** Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent. He here asks them to judge themselves by asking which prisoner should be released. **Judgment seat:** This was a seat in open court from which the Roman governor would make public judgments. **His wife:** Procula, Pilate's wife, urged Pilate to release Jesus because she had a dream about Jesus being a just man.

27:20-22 Persuaded the multitudes: The chief priests and elders sensed that they were losing the favor of Pilate to have Jesus condemned. They thus stirred up the multitudes to cry for Barabbas. It seems that the multitudes would have first asked for Jesus. This seems to be the case since they had to be persuaded to ask for Barabbas (At 3:14). **Let Him be crucified:** Those Jews who came to Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost would have been the most zealous Jews. These Jews would have had little firsthand knowledge of who Jesus was. They had surely heard many false reports concerning what Jesus taught. It is probable, therefore, that it was these Jews whom the priests and elders stirred up to call for the crucifixion of Jesus.

27:23 What evil has He done: Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent. But he cowardly relinquished to the intimidating cries of a multitude that had been misled by evil religious leaders. The religious leaders cried for Jesus' death because He claimed to be the Son of God (Jn 19:7; see Jn 19:8-15). Pilate's attempt to have Jesus released was thus thwarted by the protests of the misled multitudes. Nevertheless, he was guilty of shedding innocent blood because as a civil ruler, he did not exercise his authority to stop the condemnation of an innocent man.

27:24,25 Pilate ... could not prevail: Pilate perceived that the multitudes were becoming uncontrollable. He thus refused to exercise his legal and moral responsibility to release Jesus. **His blood be on us:** And so it was. God did bring this generation to answer for their rejection of Jesus by raining down judgment on the Jewish State in A.D. 70 in the destruction

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of Jerusalem (See comments ch 24; At 5:24).

27:26 He delivered Him to be crucified: Pilate had turned Jesus over to Herod, hoping that Herod would take care of the situation (Lk 23:7). He had announced that Jesus was innocent, and thus, not worthy of death (Lk 23:15ff). He proposed scourging instead of the death penalty (Lk 23:16). He offered Barabbas instead of Jesus (vss 15-17). He even tried to stimulate pity for Jesus by scourging Him and presenting Him before the multitudes (Jn 19:5,6). Regardless of his efforts to have Jesus released, he here cowardly washed his hands of the matter and turned Jesus over to the murderous religious leaders (See Dt 21:6-9). However, he was still guilty. He had the authority to have Jesus released, but did not exercise it.

THE CRUCIFIXION

(Mk 15:16-36; Lk 23:26-43; Jn 19:16-27)

In verses 27-31 Matthew pictures the humiliation the Son of God willingly goes through in order to accomplish the work of the cross (See Ps 22). Those who were created are here bringing great persecution on the One who created them (Cl 1:16).

27:27-31 Praetorium: This is the residence of the Roman governor and palace guard of the Roman army that was stationed in Judea (Mk 15:16). This was named after the Praetorium that was Caesar's personal guard in Rome. **Cohort:** This was a cohort of soldiers or a tenth part of a legion, and thus, could have been one hundred to one thousand men, depending on the size of the legion. **Stripped Him:** It was a custom that the soldiers be allowed the opportunity to deal with a condemned man as they pleased. Jesus thus suffered the brutality of those into whose hands He had been delivered. **Scarlet robe:** This was the robe of kings among the Romans. And thus, the soldiers set up Jesus for mockery as the king of Israel. **Crown of thorns:** A branch of a tree similar to the Acacia tree with thorns up to three or four centimeters in length, was twined in a circle in order to make a crown of mockery to place on Jesus' head. **Reed:** The twig of a tree is here placed in Jesus' hand that He willingly holds. It was to represent the royal scepter that kings carry to manifest their power and position. **They ... mocked Him:** To the unbelieving soldiers Jesus was just another common Jewish criminal that had been delivered into their hands for crucifixion. They set Him up as a supposed Jewish king, and thus, mocked Israel through their mockery of Jesus. **Spit on Him:** The soldiers performed the most humiliating and defiant act that man can perform against man (26:67; Is 50:6). They showed no mercy to one who was condemned to death. **Struck Him:** This is the Greek imperfect active tense that emphasizes continuous action. They thus continuously struck Jesus on the head. They struck him to the point that the thorns of the crown they had made for him were driven further into His flesh. **Led Him away to be crucified:** Jesus was led outside the gates of the city (Hb 13:11,12) while a mournful multitude of faithful disciples followed (Lk 23:27-31). Such was done because executions were forbidden within the city limits (Nm 15:35; 1 Kg 21:13; At 7:58; Hb 13:12).

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27:32 Cyrene: This is an area of north Africa (Compare At 2:10; 6:9; 11:20; 13:1). The soldiers thus forced this African resident to carry the cross of Jesus, which cross condemned prisoners were supposed to carry on their own if they were physically able. At this time, Jesus succumbs to the physical torture He had endured by the hands of the Roman soldiers. There were also two thieves who were carrying their crosses with Jesus (Lk 23:32). They too had been condemned to death with the Son of God.

27:33,34 Golgotha: This was "the place of the skull" (Jn 19:17). The Latin word for this place is "Calvary." **Drink mingled with gall:** Soured wine mingled with gall was given to those who were to be executed in order to relieve the pain of crucifixion (Mk 15:23; see Ps 69:21). In order to endure the full pain of the cross, however, Jesus refused to take it.

27:35-37 Divided His garments: The numerous prophecies of Jesus continued to be fulfilled even as He was taken to the cross and crucified (Lk 23:34; Ps 22:17,18). It would seem that the scribes, who were the doctors of the law, would begin to realize that the fulfillment of all these prophecies in reference to Jesus was more than coincidental. Their hardness of heart, however, had blinded their objectivity. **Kept watch over Him:** The soldiers stayed at the foot of the cross, though they were unaware of the fact that it was the Son of God who hung there (Ps 22:17). **King of the Jews:** All of the records of the gospel quote a different portion of what was actually placed above Jesus' head on the cross. Taken together the entire statement would be, "This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews" (Mk 15:26; Lk 23:38; Jn 19:19). The placing of the statement on the cross with Jesus by the Romans was meant to scorn the Jews. And such it did, for the chief priest did not like what was done (Jn 19:19-22).

27:38 Two thieves were crucified with Him: The thieves were crucified with Jesus as an added insult. Such was meant to identify Jesus as a common criminal who was being crucified by the State (Is 53:9,12).

27:39-44 Wagging their heads: See Jb 16:4; Ps 22:7; 109:25; Mk 15:29. They blasphemed in the sense that the work of God on the cross was ignored by mocking Jesus as a common criminal. Most people are at least sensitive to any man who is at the door of death. But because of their hardness of heart, these people had no mercy on one who was about to die. **Temple:** See 26:61-63. **Save Yourself:** They did not actually believe He could. They simply mocked what they believed was a claim that Jesus could work miracles. **Likewise the chief priests ... scribes and elders:** These who were accepted religious leaders mocked a man who was at the point of death. The callousness of the religious system of the Jews is here manifested in the hearts of those who had created a religion after their own social and political desires. They maintained their religiosity while at the same time showed no sorrow or remorse over a person who was about to die. **He saved others:** For this reason the Son of God was sent into the world (Jn 3:14-16). **King of Israel:** See comments At 2:29-35 (See Ps 22:6; 69:9). **He trusted in God:** And such must all do if they would be sons of God after the manner by which Jesus was obedient unto death (Hb 5:8). Jesus here placed Himself at the mercy and control of the

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Father who would raise Him up and seat Him at His right hand (Ep 1:20-22). Those who would be disciples of Jesus must so place their lives in the protecting care of the One who can raise the dead. **Insulting Him with the same words:** Luke also records that both thieves mocked Jesus at first (Lk 23:39-43). However, one thief realized the foolishness of such in view of their own situation, and thus, repented. To this one Jesus said that he would be with Him in Paradise (Lk 23:43). Keep in mind that Jesus had authority on earth to forgive sins, for He was God on earth (9:6). He could thus forgive the sins of the thief on the cross. Both thieves lived under the Sinai law, and thus, were not subject to the requirements for salvation that were announced in Acts 2. The new covenant and law had not yet been established (See comments Hb 9:16,17; compare comments At 19:1-7).

THE DEATH

(Mk 15:33-41; Lk 23:44-49; Jn 19:28-30)

27:45 Sixth hour ... until the ninth: This was from 12:00 noon until 3:00pm. **Darkness:** This was not a natural phenomenon as an eclipse of the sun. According to the calculations of astronomers today, the moon would have been on the other side of the earth at this time. This darkness was caused by God in order to manifest the eternal implications of this moment in time for which the enactment of the plan of redemption was being culminated on the cross. The darkness was God's way to draw attention to what was taking place on a cross outside the city of Jerusalem.

27:46 Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani: These are the Aramaic words for "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me." Psalm 22 was a prophecy of a very vivid picture of Jesus' death. Jesus may have stated these words to draw the attention of all to His fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 22. It was also true that Jesus was bearing the sins of all humanity (1 Pt 2:24), and thus, God in His purity, could not look on sin. In view of the omnipresence of the God in whom we live, move and have our being (At 17:28), it seems difficult to believe that God could literally turn away from the presence of Jesus. Since these are the final moments in Jesus' work to fulfill all prophecy, it seems that Jesus wanted to draw the attention of the people to the fulfillment of Psalm 22 (Lk 23:44). All that had transpired throughout His short three year to three and a half year ministry could in no possible way have happened by chance. The fact that He was on the cross in fulfillment of even the last prophecies concerning His work, was the final proof that He was not only the Messiah, but also the prophesied Son of God who would be sent forth for the salvation of man.

27:47,48 Some who stood by did not understand the clear statement that Jesus uttered. They asserted that He was calling for Elijah. **Vinegar:** The great apprehension that had been generated in the hearts of all in the area had at least spurred one person to reach forth to Jesus with a hand of compassion (Jn 19:29). The sour wine mixed with gall was given to ease pain (vs 34; Ps 69:21).

27:49,50 Others restrained those who would have mercy. They had heard of the works of Jesus, and here, they possibly wanted to see a

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miracle in the coming of Elijah. **Gave up His spirit:** See Ps 31:5. Jesus was in control of His own death. He had received authority from the Father to lay down His life (Jn 10:17,18). He thus took His own life away by voluntarily giving His spirit into the hands of the Father. During this time on the cross, Jesus also uttered the words of John 19:30 and Luke 23:46.

27:51-53 The events of verses 51-53 probably took place on the day of Jesus' resurrection. At least, those who were resurrected came out of the graves after His resurrection (vs 53). Thus Jesus was in the tomb at the time of the events of verses 51-53. **Veil ... torn:** See Ex 26:31-33. The veil of the temple divided the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place. The high priest was the only one who was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place (Lv 16:2). Because of His death and resurrection, Jesus became our High Priest by entering into the Most Holy Place for us once and for all (See Hb 6:18-20; 9:2-10). The tearing of the veil by God was God's illustration that Jesus made it possible for us to have direct access to God through Him. It is worthy of notice that the veil was torn from the top to the bottom, thus indicating that this was an act of God. **Earth quaked:** An earthquake will disturb in man the most inner feelings of security. Combine this with the great darkness, and certainly, the very soul of everyone was shaken on this most traumatic moment of history. **Graves were opened:** After the resurrection of Jesus, these resurrected saints appeared in the city of Jerusalem. This was God's visual illustration to manifest that the One who was just resurrected had become the firstfruit of the greater resurrection that is to come (See Jn 5:28,29; 1 Co 15:20-22).

27:54-56 Truly this was the Son of God: This Roman soldier of one hundred men was stricken by the events of the time. He manifested the feelings of many who experienced what had happened (See Lk 23:47). **Many women:** Some of these women were relatives of the disciples who lingered at the cross with John (Lk 8:2,3; 23:49; Jn 19:25). They were there as always, even in this time, ministering to the emotional needs of all.

THE BURIAL

(Mk 15:42-47; Lk 23:50-56; Jn 19:31-42)

27:57,58 See Jn 19:31-37. The Jews asked that the legs of those on the cross be broken in order that they might die quickly. The Passover feast was coming and they did not want the three on the cross during this time. However, Jesus had already given up His spirit. Pilate was surprised that Jesus died so quickly (Mk 15:44,45). Not one bone in His body was broken (See Ex 12:46; Nm 9:12; Dt 21:22,23; Ps 34:20; Zc 12:10). **Joseph:** Joseph was from Arimathaea, or Ramathaim-Zophim (1 Sm 1:19; Mk 15:43; see Lk 23:50,51; Jn 19:38). **Discipled:** The Greek word here is a verb, and thus, Joseph had been discipled to Jesus.

27:59-61 Joseph came to take the body around 5:00am. Nicodemus (Jn 3:1) joined Joseph in preparing the customary burial of the body of Jesus (Jn 19:39). Because of the approaching Sabbath, they hastily buried the body. They intended to return early on the first day of the week after

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the Sabbath in order to complete the burial preparation (Lk 23:56; 24:1).

New tomb: The tomb was cut out of solid rock, and thus, was a very expensive burial place. It was a tomb in which no one before had been buried. **A great stone:** This stone would have weighed hundreds of kilos. It was rolled into the opening of the tomb in order that no man on the outside could roll it out of the closure of the tomb. It seems that in the providence of God, this type of burial place was found for Jesus' body. This type of tomb would have been one of the most secure places of burial, and thus, would guard against any who might want to steal the body of Jesus. **Mary ... Mary:** These two women witnessed the burial and knew exactly where Jesus was buried. There would be no mistake in finding the tomb again when they returned early Sunday morning to complete the burial preparations.

27:62,63 The day that followed the Preparation: This was the Friday before the Sabbath of the Passover (Ex 16:22; Jn 19:31). **After three days I will rise:** The chief priests and Pharisees had at least understood what Jesus said about rising from the dead in three days (16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 26:61; Mk 8:31; 10:34). Whether they had second thoughts about such a resurrection, we do not know. Nevertheless, they were taking no chances that something happen to continue the teaching of a resurrection (See 12:40; Jn 2:19; 10:15-18).

27:64-66 Lest His disciples ... steal Him away: To prevent the body from being stolen, they asked for the security of a Roman guard and a Roman seal. Some may have been considering the resurrection of Lazarus, whom they wanted to murder also because people had witnessed His resurrection (Jn 11). **Sealing the stone and setting the guard:** The death penalty was imposed on any who would break a Roman seal without Roman authorization (Compare Dn 6:17). Any Roman soldier who was caught sleeping on guard was subject to the death penalty. In the minds of the chief priests and Pharisees, the tomb of Jesus was thoroughly secured against any possible plot to steal the body of Jesus. With the setting of the seal and guard, the religious leaders certainly felt that they had closed the case on Jesus of Nazareth. All of their scheming had been finalized and now they could carry on with their lives and erroneous religious leadership of the nation of Israel. But such was not to be the case.

Chapter 28

THE RESURRECTION

(Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-8; Jn 20:1-10)

28:1-3 As the first day of the week began to dawn: It was after the Sabbath was over that the women proceeded to the tomb. This was early Sunday morning (Mk 16:2; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1). They had prepared spices to be taken to the tomb (Mk 16:1). It was early on this Sunday morning that Jesus rose from the dead (Mk 16:9). **A great earthquake:** It could have been that the earthquake occurred while the women were on their way to the tomb (Mk 16:5). The earthquake happened when the angel rolled away the stone from the entrance of the tomb. The stone was rolled away

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in order to allow any witness to enter and see that Jesus had risen from the dead. **Angel:** There were two angels (See Mk 16:5; Lk 24:4; Jn 20:12).

28:4 Shook ... fear: Because of the countenance of one angel, the guards cowered in fear. They were so afraid that they became as dead men. The happenings here emphasize the great power that was at Jesus' disposal. He could have called on twelve legions of angels to deliver Him from death (26:53). In this case, it took only the presence of one angel to immobilize three Roman soldiers with fear.

28:5-8 While on their way to the tomb, the women had been discussing who would roll away the stone (Mk 16:3). When they arrived at the tomb, God had done what no man could do. He rolled away the stone for the resurrected to come forth from the tomb. Mary Magdalene immediately returned and informed Peter and the other apostles (Mk 16:3,4,7). The other two women also entered the tomb, but found no body (Lk 24:1-9). After announcing and confirming Jesus' resurrection, the angel instructed the women to inform the other disciples. Jesus had said that He would meet them in Galilee (26:32; Mk 16:7). **With fear and great joy:** The women had seen no vision and experienced no hallucination. They trembled with fear from the sight of the angel, but had great joy concerning what the angel had said. Jesus was raised from the dead (Mk 16:8). The circumstances surrounding the event were certainly overwhelming for people to experience.

THE APPEARANCES

28:9,10 Jesus met them: This is possibly the first of several appearances Jesus made to the disciples before His ascension (See Jn 20:11-18). A chronology of the appearances would be explained in the following texts: (1) Mt 28:9,10, (2) Mk 16:9-11; Jn 20:19-25, (3) Lk 24:34; 1 Co 15:8, (4) Mk 16:12,13; Lk 24:13ff, (5) Jn 20:19-25, (6) Jn 20:26-29; (7) Jn 21:1-13, (8) 1 Co 15:6, (9) 1 Co 15:7, (10) Lk 24:50-52; At 1:3-12. Eleven appearances would be counted if Matthew 28:16-20 is considered a separate appearance from the appearances recorded in Mark 16:12,13 and Luke 24:13-27. It was not the purpose of the New Testament writers to record a chronological order of the appearances or the number of appearances. The purpose for recording the appearances was to make a record of the fact that Jesus presented Himself alive after the resurrection in order to prove the resurrection (At 1:3). Therefore, it is difficult to determine both the number of appearances and the chronology by which Jesus appeared to individuals and groups after His resurrection.

THE COVER UP

28:11-14 The attempt to cover up the events that took place at the tomb is evidence that something did happen that the chief priests did not want told by the soldiers. **Gave a large sum of money:** The events at the tomb had been traumatic and undeniable by the guards. It took a large amount of money to keep them quiet. According to Roman law, the soldiers should have been executed for allowing a Roman seal to be broken.

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Stole Him away: The very fact that this explanation was dreamed up by the chief priests and elders is evidence that what they affirmed—that the body was stolen—did not actually happen. The disciples did not steal the body of Jesus, and then claim that He was resurrected. **If it comes to the governor's ears:** The religious leaders reassured the guards that they would explain the situation if they were ever questioned. When the apostles started preaching the resurrection, the governor would certainly have made inquiries and investigated the tomb. On finding that the body of Jesus was gone, there would have been an inquiry. So the religious leaders here promise that they will lie on behalf of the soldiers in order to discourage belief in the resurrection.

28:15 Commonly reported: Not only did the religious leaders promise to lie for the soldiers, they carried out their plan to lie and spread the belief among the Jews that the disciples had actually stolen the body of Jesus in order to preach the resurrection of Jesus. However, the very fact that there was a scheme to cover up the resurrection and the systematic spreading of the lie, is evidence that something did happen at the tomb. The body of Jesus was gone and no one could explain what happened. Nevertheless, the disciples, to whom Jesus appeared, proclaimed on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 that God had raised Jesus (At 2:36). The appearance of Jesus to Paul on the Damascus road was significant in reference to the proof that Jesus was raised from the dead (See At 9:1-16). Before his conversion, Saul would have certainly believed all the reports of the “stolen body theory.” However, when Jesus appeared to him alive on the Damascus road, the traumatic realization that Jesus had truly risen from the dead, changed his life forever.

THE COMMISSION

28:16-18 The eleven disciples went away into Galilee: Jesus had promised that He would meet with the disciples at a specific mountain in Galilee, which mountain is not mentioned (26:32; 28:7,10). Before this special meeting occurred, however, Jesus had appeared to the disciples in order to reassure them. **But some doubted:** Verse 18 states, “Then Jesus came” The meaning is that Jesus came near to them on this occasion. This explains the doubting of verse 17. When Jesus appeared to them on this occasion, He first appeared to them at a great distance. Some of the disciples recognized Him immediately. However, some did not, and thus doubted that it was Jesus. The “doubting,” therefore, refers to the events at the time of their encounter on the occasion of this appearance, not their belief as to who He was or the fact of His resurrection. The occasion of the disciples, and specifically Thomas’ doubting, occurred immediately after the resurrection and in Jerusalem before this appearance (See Mk 16:11; Jn 20:24-29). The meeting at the mountain in Galilee occurred many days later after the disciples had made the long walk from Jerusalem to Galilee. **All authority:** Jesus here makes a proclamation to the disciples that establishes the source of all authority among His disciples. This is the foundation upon which verses 19 & 20 are based. Throughout His ministry,

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Jesus knew that He would be exercising this authority (See Jn 13:3; 17:2). At this time, all authority had been given to Him, but He was yet to exercise such at the right hand of the Father as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). He was soon to ascend to the throne of God in the heavenly realm in order to rule over all that exists (See comments Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2:8-10; Cl 2:10; 1 Pt 3:22). All was in fulfillment of the Son of Man receiving priesthood, glory, dominion and kingdom reign over all things (Dn 2:44; 7:13,14; Zc 6:12,13; Is 9:6). After the ascension, Jesus began to exercise His authority from the throne of David. He is there today reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). He exercises authority through the power of His word (Jn 12:48). He will reign with authority until He comes again, at which time He will return kingdom reign to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in order that God be all in all (See comments 1 Co 15:24-28). **Authority ... on earth:** We must accept this for what it says. Jesus has all authority on earth. Since He had previously taught the disciples that there would be no lords or authorities among them, then we interpret this statement of Jesus to mean that there are no lords or authorities among the disciples (See comments Mk 10:35-45). Jesus has all authority on earth. One would be presumptuous to steal some of the authority that Jesus has among His disciples. When interpreting any passage concerning leadership, therefore, one must always interpret the responsibility of leadership in the scriptural context of Mark 10:35-45 and Matthew 28:18. All authority is in the hands of Jesus. He has given responsibility to His disciples to carry out His continued mission on earth. We must not confuse responsibility with authority (See comments Hb 13:17). Jesus has all authority. We have all the responsibility to carry out the commission that He gives in verses 19 & 20. Only because Jesus now has all authority over all things can He give such a global commission as is stated in the following verses.

28:19 All four records of the gospel mention a commission that Jesus gives to the disciples to take the good news to the world (28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16; Lk 24:46,47; Jn 20:21-23). Studied together, Jesus commissioned the disciples to (1) preach Jesus in order to make disciples for Jesus, (2) preach the gospel of His death for our sins and resurrection for our hope in order that men might be saved, (3) immerse disciples in water, and (4) teach the word of Jesus to immersed disciples. **Go:** The Greek verb here is aorist participle that expresses continuous action. It could thus be translated, "having gone." The action of the verb, therefore, is dependent on the action of the main verb "make disciples" which is aorist active. Jesus knew that the disciples now had the good news of His resurrection, and thus were going. He did not need to command them to go. The command is in making disciples ("teach"). In their going into all the world they must disciple people to Him. **All the nations:** The Greek *ta ethne* refers to every ethnic group. Jesus is not discussing governmental nations, but cultural ethnic groups that are scattered throughout the world. He wants the disciples to make disciples in every ethnic group of the world (Mk 16:15; Jn 20:21). **Baptizing them:** They were to immerse all those

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they had disciples to Him (Mk 16:16). Therefore, one must be committed to follow Jesus before being immersed into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **In the name:** The Greek word *eis* means that they were immersed “unto” or “into” a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Acts when one was immersed “in” the name of Jesus, the Greek word is different (At 2:38; 10:48; 19:5). In Acts the Greek word is “*en*” and refers to one being immersed in reference to the authority of the name of Jesus. Two things, therefore, occur when one is immersed. When one is immersed in conjunction with the authority of Jesus (in His name), he is subsequently immersed into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **The name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit:** This is not something that Jesus is commanding to be said at the time one is immersed. It is something that happens. When one is baptized, what happens is that he comes into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In teaching one to be a disciple, the prospect should be taught this before coming to the point of immersion. He must be taught that this is what will happen in the heavenly realm when he is immersed in the name of Jesus.

28:20 Teaching them to observe all things: The love of the disciples must move them to respond in obedience to the commandments of Jesus (Jn 14:15; 1 Jn 4:19). Therefore, the teachings of Jesus have been perpetuated throughout history by disciples teaching disciples the commandments of Jesus (See comments 2 Tm 2:2). One of the principal teachings that the disciples were to teach is exactly what Jesus was teaching them on this occasion, that they go into all the world and make disciples of every ethnic group. **I am with you:** Jesus knew that they would go through tremendous persecution, even to the loss of life (At 12:1,2; see Mt 18:20; At 18:10). They must be confident, therefore, that they serve a God in whom they live, move and have their being (At 17:28). They will never be outside His presence. **To the end of the age:** The Greek word *aionios*, which is used here and is translated “age,” refers to a predetermined period of time. It does not refer to that which is of substance, as “world.” The disciples were coming to the consummation of the Jewish age (*aionios*), at the end of which, God would terminate national Israel (See comments 13:39,40; 24:3). Their specific mission, therefore, was to preach the gospel to every creature in view of the fact that the end of national Israel was coming. This end would come in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed, thus marking the end of national Israel (See comments ch 24). In reference to the broader context of the disciples teaching all things that Jesus taught them on this occasion, the end of the age would have a secondary reference to the end of our dispensation of time in which we are now living. There is coming a time when the preaching of the gospel will not take place at the end of this world because there will be no need for such in the new heavens and earth that are to come after the final coming of Jesus (2 Pt 3:13). Therefore, until Jesus comes in His final coming, the preaching of the gospel will have found its fulfillment in the new heavens and earth. Therefore, until Jesus comes again, His commission is, “Go

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into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:16). The apostles were not personally and physically able to accomplish this commission in their lifetime. Therefore, the commission is continued through those they taught who went into all the world in their generation. It is our responsibility today to carry on with the great commission of Jesus. The world can be evangelized in every generation of the existence of the church if disciples will arise to the occasion to assume individual responsibility to preach the gospel. God did not give the church in any generation an impossible task of world evangelism. We must have faith in the fact that God intends that heaven be populated with souls. We are thus in the job of populating heaven through the preaching of the gospel.

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